ENTERTAINMENT / D1

Acclaimed Fil-Am book 'Dogeaters' to be restaged in Los Angeles

LIVING STARS / E1

Casa de Amalia: The movie queen says her home is 'relaxed, eclectic, very me'

WORLD / A20

Iraq defers hanging 2 Saddam aides after dictator's bungled execution

NEWS / A2

Janjalani DNA sent to United States for analysis

From yap to growl, device dogs intruders

BEERSHEBA, ISRAEL —An Israeli firm has designed a security system to ensure jailbreakers or intruders find a watchdog's bark can indeed be worse than its bite.

Harnessing technology that interprets barks

FROM PAGE 22

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Friday, January 5, 2007 ★★ 5 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 28 P18 www.inquirer.net

More endangered fish found on Chinese boat

By Marlon Ramos
Inquirer Southern Luzon
and Norman Bordadora
in Manila

GOVERNMENT INSPECTORS FOUND THIS week more live Napoleon wrasse, an endangered fish species, in the water tanks of the fishing boat of 30 suspected Chinese poachers who

MORE A15

'Palace took law into own hands'

VFA director speaks out vs Smith transfer

By Volt Contreras, Christine O. Avendaño and Michael Lim Ubac

A MALACAÑANG OFFICIAL REFUSES TO SING ALONG WITH the rest of President Macapagal-Arroyo's men in praise of the Court of Appeals' Wednesday ruling on the custody dispute over a US Marine convicted of raping a Filipino woman.

In fact, Undersecretary Zosimo Paredes yesterday said the executive branch "took the law into its own hands" when it conducted the Dec. 29 operation to retrieve Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith from the Makati City Jail and transfer him to the US Embassy in Manila.

Paredes, the executive director of the Presidential Commission on the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement (VFACom), said the appellate court was "entitled here and there" when it affirmed the legality of Smith's earlier commitment to the city jail, yet found nothing irregular in his clandestine transfer back to US custody without court approval.

"I am for the return, but it should have been done properly—no coercion, no bullying," said the official, who contended he was taking his post by being openly critical of both the court ruling and Smith's transfer ahead of a court "authorization."

PALACE TOOK | A3

In a phone interview yesterday, Paredes said his position was for the return of Smith to the custody of US authorities in compliance with the VFA, but that he objected to the way the Marine was whisked out of the city jail close to midnight of Dec. 29.

"I am for the return, but it should have been done properly—no coercion, no bullying," said the official, who contended he was taking his post by being openly critical of both the court ruling and Smith's transfer ahead of a court "authorization."

PALACE TOOK | A3

IN-YOUR-FACE. Protesters are not letting up on their demand to return convicted rapist Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith to Philippine custody. They stage another rally at the Mabuhay Rotunda in Quezon City.

Lawyers focus on reversal of rape conviction

By Tarra Y. Quismundo
and Norman Bordadora

WITH LANCE CPL. DANIEL SMITH HAVING been returned to US custody with the help of Malacañang, his camp's next move is to work for the reversal of his rape conviction—a decision that, barring a presidential pardon, the Philippine judiciary has the sole power to make.

Smith's lawyer Jose Justiniano told the Inquirer yesterday that the US Marine and his legal team would now concentrate on appealing his Dec. 4 conviction by Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon. The verdict came with a prison sentence of up to 40 years.

"I spoke with him over the phone and I told him that now we will focus on the appeal," Justiniano said on the phone, refuting a conversation with Smith on Wednesday afternoon.

Interior Undersecretary Marlou Ceguna, the leader of the Philippine government's "visitorial" team assigned to monitor the 21-year-old Marine's detention at the US Embassy, dropped in on him yesterday and found him in the company of three Filipino preachers.

Ceguna said it was the second time a member of the team checked on Smith since its composition was announced at the Department of the Interior and Local Government on Tuesday.

LAWYERS | A3

ASEAN SUMMIT

All systems go in Cebu, including anti-GMA protests, road repairs

LEFTWING ACTIVISTS AND GOVernment critics yesterday said they would organize protests denouncing President Macapagal-Arroyo's policies at next week's Asean summit in Cebu City and in test the right security.

Renato Reyes, secretary general of the left-wing umbrella organization Bayan, said protests planned for the Jan. 10-15 Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit were not meant to embarrass the host government but attended to draw the attention of visiting regional leaders to alleged human rights abuses and political killings in the Philippines.

"It is Arroyo's government that makes our country look bad," Reyes said. "We don't see any reason to crack down on rallies and prevent people from marching. That would expose the Philippines as an undemocratic country."

Activists said they were planning peaceful rallies, protests and conferences near the summit venues.

The annual conference hosted

ALL SYSTEMS | A14

Cops find witnesses disputing gov's story

CRIME/SUSPENSE. Police Director Jesus Verzosa, outgoing chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, updates the media on the latest in the Bersamin murder and how the pattern of killings in Abra could possibly be linked to Gov. Vicente Valera.

By DJ Yap

PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE INVESTIGAtors have found witnesses who disputed Abra Gov. Vicente Valera's claim that he had not met in the past two years with a key suspect in the murders of Rep. Luis "Chito" Bersamin Jr. and his bodyguard last month.

Valera's pronouncement that he had not seen Freddie Dupo recently was a lie, said Supt. Benjamin de los Santos, chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG).

"We have information that proves he (Valera) has a propensity to lie and deceive the public," De los Santos said at a press conference at Camp Karingal in Quezon City yesterday.

Employees of a car dealership in Marikina City, where Valera had purchased his Chevrolet Suburban SUV, had positively identified Dupo as one of the persons who was with the governor when he paid for the vehicle last November, De los Santos said.

Three other persons were with Valera, including a woman with a "strong resemblance" to Valera's rumored girlfriend, Hersjerlyn Diringcha, when the governor paid for the car, the official said.

Dupo was one of five people who allegedly carried out the Dec. 16 killings of the 62-year-old Bersamin and his police security aide just after the Abra congressman had attended the wedding of his niece at Mt. Carmel Church in Quezon City, according to former Army M/Sgt. Rufino Pandoy.

COPS | A8

Labor leaders urge Senate to OK ₱125 pay hike

By TJ Burgonio

WHILE THEY FOUND THE CONGRESSMEN'S recent dubious, labor leaders yesterday urged the Senate to pass in toto a House measure proposing a ₱125 across-the-board wage increase if only to avoid being blamed for its nonpassage in the run-up to the May 14 elections.

At the Senate hearing on the legislated wage hike, the labor leaders argued for the need to approve the measure, which the House passed before its Christmas break after sitting on it for six years, in the face of objections from business leaders.

"In our view, this was passed for the wrong reasons. But just the same we believe that this should be passed because it would benefit the workers," Joselito Mata of the Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) said at the hearing of the committee on labor.

House Bill No. 3496 proposes a ₱125-wage increase over a three-year period, starting with ₱45 this year, ₱40 in the second year, and another ₱40 in the third and final year. The measure has yet to be transmitted to the Senate.

Mata said the increase would boost the "survival of workers."

The National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC) placed the family living wage in Metro Manila as of October last year at ₱874 a day, about twice the minimum wage of ₱358 a day.

The NWPC said the family living wage in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

LABOR | A14

Lea stages Broadway comeback in 'Les Miz'

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Entertainment

FILIPINO SINGER-ACTRESS Lea Salonga is returning to Broadway.

This time she will play the role of Fantine in Cameron Mackintosh's new production of "Les Misérables," a stage-book musical based on the classic by French novelist Victor Hugo.

This was reported in two US-based websites (broadwayworld.com and playbill.com) and was confirmed by Lea herself, who had just arrived in Manila from a Honolulu holiday.

Fourteen years ago, Lea played Eponine in "Les Misérables." In comparison, Fantine is a much bigger role and was played by Uma Thurman in the 1998 movie version directed by Bille August.

A tragic character, Fantine is a factory worker forced into prostitution. She later dies and leaves a young daughter,

SALONGA: First Asian actress to portray Fantine in "Les Miserables," one of the longest-running musicals on Broadway.

Cosette, with Jean Valjean.

In the musical, Fantine's role is brief but pivotal. Composers and lyricists Alain Boublil,

LEA | A14

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

JOINT RP-US UNDERTAKING

Janjalani DNA sent to US for test

By Alcuin Papa

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE YESTERday said the analysis of DNA from remains believed to be that of Abu Sayyaf group leader Khaddafy Janjalani will be a "joint" undertaking between the Philippines and the United States.

PNP Director General Oscar Calderon said the US interest in having the remains identified was natural since some of Janjalani's victims had been Americans.

"It will be a joint investigation because the US has an interest here. The kidnappings staged by the [Abu Sayyaf] in the past also involved US citizens," Calderon said.

He also said having the DNA analysis done in the US was "fastest" and "more scientific."

"But this is not to say we don't have the capabilities here. We have the facilities," he added.

PNP Crime Laboratory head Chief Supt. Arturo Cacdac said the DNA analysis "will be conducted in the US," confirming an earlier Inquirer story.

Janjalani's brother

Cacdac also said the PNP already had comparative samples for the DNA analysis. But he declined to reveal what the samples were or if they had been taken from Janjalani's brother, Usman, who is incarcerated at the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa City.

The Inquirer reported last week that two PNP crime lab officers and two members of the Presidential Bureau of Investigation (PBI) managed to take the samples.

Cacdac said the results would be available in two weeks.

He also said the PNP Crime Lab had recommended sending one of its DNA experts, Senior Insp. Lorna Inocian, to the US to join the testing team. "We are just waiting for the paperwork."

"As soon as the tests are completed, we will make the results available to the public," Cacdac said.

On Dec. 27, 2006, Filipino Marines unearthed a body believed to be that of Janjalani, the leader of the notorious Abu Sayyaf, in a remote area in Barangay Kabunbalan, Patikul, Sulu.

Tawa Abu Sayyaf members who had named themselves in to the authorities led the Marines to the spot. They claimed Janjalani was fatally wounded in an encounter with government forces in September last year.

$1-M bounty

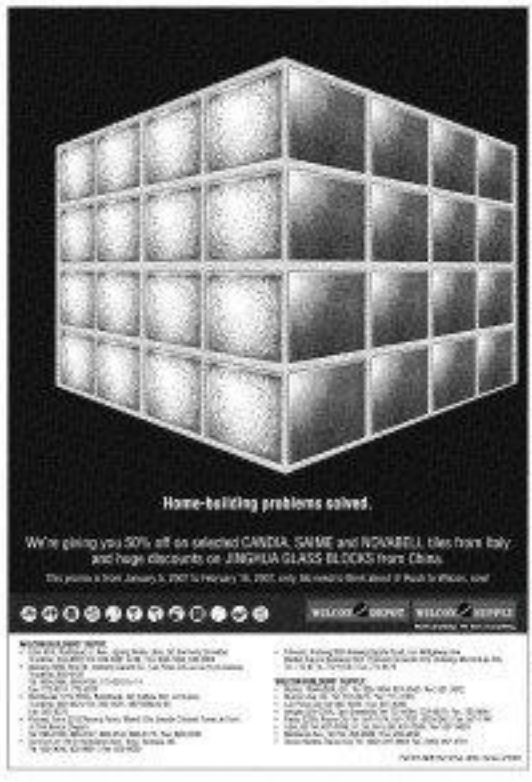
Janjalani had a $1-million price on his head. He took over the reins of the Abu Sayyaf after his elder brother, Abdurajak, was killed in a firefight with police in Barangay Ice, Dec. 18, 1998.

Officials have said the two former Abu Sayyaf members might get the reward money.

The Abu Sayyaf gained notoriety in the '90s for a spree of kidnappings, particularly of foreign tourists. Among their more prominent victims were American missionary couple Martin and Gracia Burnham.

It was around this time, it was believed, that the Abu Sayyaf established links with the Indonesia-based Jemaah Islamiyah regional terror group, which in turn had ties to the al-Qaida international terror network headed by Osama bin Ladna.

WAITING FOR GLORIA Residents of Barangay 020 in Magsaysay (with the arrival of their barangay neighbors, who took a walking tour of the communities around Malacañang yesterday. President Macapagal-Arroyo interacts with barangay residents and officials on several issues, including employment, potable water, peace and order and drainage. She also greeted students of the Philippine Science High School (right, photo). LAWRENCE JOSE



BIR misses mark, but hits own target

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE missed the tax collection target set by the national government for 2006, posting a P95-billion shortfall, because of factors which it claimed were "beyond its control."

The BIR yesterday reported that it collected P644.4 billion in taxes in 2006, against the P675.5-billion official target set by the Investment Development Budget and Coordination Committee (DBCC), the agency tasked with setting economic policies and targets for the national government.

In 2005, the BIR recorded a shortfall of P51 billion.

But the BIR sets its own internal collection target and does not subscribe to the goal set by the national government.

According to the BIR's own target, its P644.4-billion collection in 2006 was P8.9 billion higher than the goal it had set for itself.

BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Bating yesterday claimed that the agency had exceeded its actual collection targets for 2006 by P9.0 billion, which he said was the highest collection target and the highest collection ever made in the bureau's 102-year history.

Disparity

Bating said the total tax collection declined solely from BIR operations recorded at P611 billion. P35 billion more than the bureau's revised actual target of P576.4 billion.

The apparent disparity in figures is because Bating maintains that the expected collection from taxes on income from investments in government securities should not be part of the BIR's revenue-collection goal.

This is because the BIR has no control over the amount of government securities that the national government, through the Bureau of the Treasury, will issue.

Last year, the fee extended some sectors for government securities due to the government's declining need for borrowings, which in turn is due to its improving fiscal condition, Bating noted.

Government securities, including Treasury bills and Treasury bonds, are debt instruments issued by the government. Those who purchase T-bills and bonds, which carry interest, serve as lenders to the government and are paid back upon maturity of the debt instruments.

The P675 billion official target covered documentary stamp taxes from the sale of Treasury bills and bonds amounting to P49 billion which the BIR was not able to realize.

Bating said the BIR's inability to meet the target of P675.4 billion set by the DBCC was largely due to external factors, and so the tax agency should not be held accountable for it.

Critics have pointed to the inefficiency in tax collection and corruption as the reasons behind the BIR's chronic shortfalls.

Bating, however, blames the decline in revenue rates and the fall in domestic oil production, aside from the lower-than-expected volume of government securities issued, as other factors affecting the BIR's collection performance.

The decline in interest rate adversely affected the BIR's collection of taxes on income from bank deposits, while lower oil production cut the collection of taxes on oil, he said.

Biggest contributor

The BIR is the biggest revenue contributor to the national government among the line agencies, accounting for roughly 60 percent of national government revenues.

Despite the failure to meet the national government's tax collection target, the government is still expected to have reduced its budget deficit for 2006 to an amount much lower than the target.

The national government has set a target of reducing the budget deficit from P144.8 billion in 2005 to only P125 billion in 2006.

But the Department of Finance said the deficit for 2006 likely settled anywhere between P80 billion and P90 billion. The DOF will report the 2006 budget deficit sometime next week.

The expected posting of a much lower budget deficit in 2006, despite the shortfall in tax collection, has been achieved largely through tight spending.

The government was forced to tighten expenditures for 2006 because of the failure of Congress to pass the proposed P1.003-trillion national budget ceiling.

The non-passage of the 2006 budget forced government to operate using the 2005 budget ceiling, which was almost P100 billion lower.

With a report from Cynthia D. Balana

'POLITICS IS LOCAL'

Puno sees win for admin bets

By Norman Bordadora

INTERIOR SECRETARY ROBERTO Puno, reputed to be a political strategist for President Macapagal-Arroyo, has predicted a good year for the administration political ally.

In an interview, Puno dismissed claims of a resurgent opposition because of the supposed public outrage at the ruling coalition's abuse of its majority in the House of Representatives.

Mr. Arroyo's allies in the House have been criticized for using their numbers to dismiss several impeachment cases against the President and for attempting in force a rump House assembly to change the Charter without Senate participation.

"The mid-term elections will basically be local. It will be about performance and delivery of services and not about which way politicians positioned themselves with regard to national issues," said Puno.

In his first administration's rump, passed lack of members capable of being tapped for the Senate, Puno said it won't matter much when the campaign starts and the administration's machinery takes over.

"The national candidates will have to depend on the local candidates, especially in a mid-term election. Straight ballots distributed in the local level usually carry just about three names of national candidates," he said.

When it comes to securing the support of local officials, Puno said the administration has an edge, with almost all provincial governors supporting Mr. Arroyo and her allies.

"Except for perhaps three, we have all the governors in our fold. We also have most of the mayors," he said.

Puno said the opposition's bid to gain the majority in the House of Representatives and mount a more successful impeachment bid against the President would fail as opposition incumbents are outperformed by the administration representatives.

"The congressional elections will also be about what projects and services were delivered to their respective constituencies," he added.

Puno said the opposition's ranks in the House is also expected to dwindle further as three more congressmen like Minority Leader Francis Escudero and Deputy Speaker Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano seek election to the Senate.

PUNO OPTIMISTIC. Interior Secretary Roberto Puno is on ambush interview during yesterday's New Year call at Camp Crame. JAM ACOSTA

PNP girds for polls, vows all-out drive vs armed groups

By Alexis Puga

WITH ELECTION-RELATED violence already beginning, the Philippine National Police (PNP) announced yesterday the formation of Task Force HOPE (Honest, Orderly, Peaceful Elections) to "go all-out" against some 90 private armed groups.

PNP Chief Director General Oscar Calderon told reporters in Camp Crame yesterday that the campaign against private armies is part of the PNP preparations for the coming May polls.

Calderon said they expect the local and mid-term elections to be violent, and have "planned for the worst scenario."

Task Force HOPE was formed on December, just days after Abra's congressman Luis Bersamin was gunned down. Lee is head of the Ilo Carmel Church in New Manila, Quezon City.

Deputy Director General Avelino Razon, deputy chief for administration, revealed they based on their reports last year, there are a total of 90 armed groups in the country, with 36 located in the northernmost Region in Mindoro.

Razon also said they have already "neutralized" a total of 23 groups: five in Region 5, four in Region 2, four in Region 3, one in Region 5, three in Region 6, two in Region 8, and six in the Cordillera Autonomous Region (CAR), where the province of Abra is located.

"It's not that we are doing this just now. We have conducted operations over these but we have intensified our operations now that the elections are near," Razon clarified.

Razon said police have not been able to establish a link between the armed groups and politicians. Most of the armed groups, he claimed, were "more involved in criminal activities."

But he said they would continue to monitor these groups because they could be used by unscrupulous politicians." Razon said.

"We are expecting (violence) since this is a local election... this is a hotly contested election," added PNP Director for Operations Wilfredo Garcia.

He explained that the Task Force has been divided and assigned to pre-election, election day, and post-election periods.

Garcia said that for the pre-election period, police would set up checkpoints, implement the firearms ban and disarm private armed groups.

During the election day itself, police will be responsible for securing polling precincts, Garcia added.

After the elections, police would continue implementing security measures "in case there is need for a recount," Garcia explained.

Comelec paves way for another round of people's initiative

By Jovanie Aning

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS has paved the way for the possible holding of another round of the administration-backed "people's initiative" signature campaign to amend the Constitution, and possibly a plebiscite to be held at the same time as mid-term elections in May.

The Comelec released yesterday revised rules on supplementary guidelines on the conduct of such an initiative and a subsequent plebiscite. The guidelines were published in two dailies, as required by law, and will take effect Jan. 15.

The new Comelec Resolution No. 3946 provides the missing implementing guidelines for Republic act No. 6735 or the Initiative and Referendum Act of 1989. It specifies the forms needed for an initiative petition, the process of verification and certification of the required number of signatories.

Last October, the Supreme Court junked the administration's signature campaign as a "grand deception" but upheld RA 6735 and Comelec Resolution 2300 as sufficient basis for the conduct of a people's initiative and plebiscite to amend the Constitution.

The Commissioners began deliberating on the "supplemental guidelines" a few days before Christmas.

"It's essentially a fine-tuning" of Resolution 2300 which was adopted by Comelec in 1998, explained Commissioner Rene Sarmiento in a phone interview.

But office-document Executive for Computing" with Malacañang to expedite the initiative guidelines so that the Charter change plebiscite could be held before or simultaneously with the May 14 polls.

Comelec education and information director Jesus Arthur Jimenez said the new resolution would ensure that the agency would not be caught "flat-footed" when another group decides to file another Charter change initiative.

There have been reports that Sigma and Elbo were planning to revive the people's initiative and hold the plebiscite simultaneously with the May 14 elections.

Sarmiento, however, said he has "reservations and feelings of apprehension" should a new initiative petition for Charter change be filed again before Comelec.

"The process may have to be cashed and I think the time factor is important here, considering that the May 14 elections is so close; I don't think we'll be free counters," he added.

But Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos Jr. had earlier said there would be no problem. The Comelec could print the plebiscite questions on the ballots to be used for the May mid-term election, Abalos assured.

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Special attention go out to the Go Negosyo Founders and Mentors who have generously donated their time, talent and resources for the betterment of overall the entrepreneurs. Without a doubt, their passion, valuable advice and mentoring have created sufficient impact not only to those who seek their counsel but also to the Entrepreneurship Revolution.

*To the Go Negosyo Mentors (as viewed thanks! Let's keep the fire burning!

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Joey Concepcion
Founding Trustee
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- Tourism Negosyo — March 2 to 4, 2007
- GoNegosyo Caravan in Key Cities and Provinces
- Fashion Negosyo — 3rd Quarter of 2007

Noli to US Filipinos: Keep dollars coming

By Cynthia G. Balana

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO yesterday said the Philippines would most become the next success story in Asia if overseas Filipinos would continue to keep their money flowing into the country.

De Castro made the statement in a speech before some 300 leaders of the Philippine community in Washington DC where he attended the state funeral services for the late US President Gerald Ford on Tuesday as the personal representative of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"There are many investment opportunities in the Philippines right now. Those of you who have the funds, or have control over funds, may wish to consider placing your money in our economy. Even small contributions will mean nice to poor families in the Philippines," he said.

De Castro said the healthier business climate, supported by inflows from overseas Filipinos, has created a sustained appreciation in the peso.

The meeting was held at the Philippine embassy and was attended by Filipino employees of the International Monetary Fund, representatives of the Philippine-American Foundation for Charities and Send the Hungry Inc., Citibank Filipino Employees Association, Alpha Travel, ILI Agency for International Development, Montgomery County Phil-Am Association, Filipino Reverse Group, Ducom Society of America, BOSERAF, International Finance Corporation Filipino Employees Association, Bankers Trust Filipino Group, De La Salle Alumni Association, and Filipino graduate academy.

In his speech, De Castro said that investments from overseas Filipino workers and dual citizens were vital to the country's bid to prosper.

"Perhaps, one of the most encouraging photos of 2006 is the one which was featured in the year-end issue of a local paper," the Vice President said. "The picture shows our stock market traders, hands raised high and jubilant over the market's performance at the end of the year."

Right course

The Vice President said that at present, the Philippines is in the right course towards development, citing controlled budget deficit, increased tax collection and the revival of investors' confidence in the country.

As a result, he said, interest rates were going down, the exchange rate was improving, with the peso getting stronger than ever, while inflation was under control.

De Castro also said the government would embark on a major infrastructure program in the next few years to improve the competitive advantage of major regions: agriculture in North Luzon and Mindanao, tourism in Central Philippines, trade and industry in Metro Manila and the Urban Luzon Beltway, and technology at the Cyber Corridor.

As chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), he said, the national housing program has already delivered almost 50,000 socialized housing units.

In addition, the government has successfully created a policy environment conducive to housing investments, he said.

De Castro likewise cited the deliberate effort to reduce interest rates for housing loans to make home ownership more affordable.

"Some may say it is distorting the market situation—but who benefits from the market boom? As long as we are carefully targeting our clientele and we are not directly competing with the matter of the private sector, I do not see any distortion there. What we are doing is to implement a targeted subsidy scheme," he said.

24,000 Pinoys now have dual RP citizenship

SINCE THE DUAL CITIZENSHIP LAW WAS passed three years ago, nearly 24,000 former Filipinos have reacquired their Philippine citizenship, according to the Bureau of Immigration.

As of Jan. 2, 2007, a total of 23,946 applications for dual citizenship had been approved, Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. said yesterday.

Those successful applicants could now enjoy their rights as Filipinos, Fernandez said.

The bureau receives an average of 30 to 40 applications for dual citizenship per day, according to Arvin Santos, head of the ID task force on dual citizenship.

The dual citizenship law was passed in 2003 but was only implemented in 2006 after the SI was tasked as lead agency for its implementation.

Under the said law, former natural-born Filipinos who became naturalized citizens of other countries could apply for Philippine citizenship.

The law was enacted to encourage former Filipinos living in other countries to return here and invest in the country, the BI said.

The number of applications surged in October 2005, bureau said, when the bureau decided to relax the requirements for dual citizenship.

Under the new rules, applicants are no longer required to submit their National Statistics Office-authenticated birth certificates, instead, they can submit their birth certificates from the local civil registrar in their birthplace or other documents proving that they were natural-born Filipinos, like a Philippine passport, a voter's affidavit or a marriage contract.

Fernandez earlier said he decided to ease the rules for reacquiring Philippine citizenship after receiving complaints from applicants who said they could not meet certain documentary requirements like their NSO-authenticated birth certificates. Leila B. Salaverria

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, January 5, 2007
Before Epiphany
St. John Neumann

1st Reading: 1 John 3:11-21
Gospel: John 1:43-51

Jesus decided to go off for Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found the one that Moses wrote about in the law, and the prophets as well. He is Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth."

Nathanael replied, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathanael coming, he said of him, "Here comes an Israelite, a true one; there is nothing false in him." Nathanael asked him, "How do you know me?" And Jesus said to him, "Before Philip called you, you were under the fig tree and I saw you."

Nathanael answered, "Master, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" But Jesus replied, "You believe because I said, 'I saw you under the fig tree.' But you will see greater things than this."

Truly I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Commentary:

We must make choices. Between doing good or evil, between loving others or shifting them, refusing to share what we have and others have big time. We must live in truth and in deed, to another big day that God knows everything. We are either Cain or Abel, killing or dying inside.

Each person's mission here on earth, Abadia of the Incarnation, as she was likewise quite often to be known, is the sum total of his every beginning that are meant one day to become the Son of Man, accompanied by the angels, coming out of heaven. Who do we think Jesus is? Who must we come to see and worship this year?

2 rebel officers 'mentally' tortured, wives claim

THE WIVES OF TWO REBEL ARMY officers have claimed their husbands are being "mentally tortured" by the Army since their capture six months ago.

Army 1st Lt. Sonny Sumiaono and 2nd Lt. Alden Baldonado have been kept in "lockstep" (military confinement at the maximum security compound of the Intelligence Security Group (ISG) at Fort Bonifacio since July 27, their wives said.

They said the two officers were not being adequately fed, and deprived of reading materials and personal grooming items like combs.

Sumiaono and Baldonado are among the 97 junior officers, who rejoin their fellows in the Magdalo group, undergoing court-martial for allegedly participating in the July 2003 failed coup, also known as the Oakwood mutiny.

The Army has denied it was keeping Sumiaono and Baldonado in solitary confinement.

But it refused to allow a team from the Commission on Human Rights to inspect the detention facilities for the two officers last Dec. 28.

'Treated well'

Army spokesperson Maj. Ernesto Torres denied that the two officers were in solitary confinement or being tortured in any way.

"They are not in solitary confinement. They are being treated well, according to the Geneva rights," he said.

In an interview, Wilma Sumiaono and Wilma Baldonado said they were afraid their husbands would soon lose their minds under such conditions.

"We just want them taken out of ISG. They don't see anyone, they can't talk to anyone. It's mental torture," said Wilma Baldonado who is based in General Santos City and was only able to come to Manila three weeks ago with her two young children.

"We are not asking for special treatment. We just ask for what is humane. They might go crazy there," said Nina Sumiaono who lives in Bulacan.

Sumiaono escaped from detention in Fort Bonifacio on Jan. 17, 2006, along with 1st Lt. Lawyn-Loriega Jan Juan, Nathaniel Rabonza and Patricio Sumaling Jr.

Sumiaono, Rabonza and the missing were recaptured at a Quezon City safe house last July.

Fish three were Baldonado, Army 2nd Lt. Angelbert Cay and Navy Lt. Ernan Gabiza.

Juo Juan was captured earlier on Feb. 21, 2006 in Batangas.

Military officials claimed the group at the safe house was planning to stage an attack during President Macapagal-Arroyo's State of the Nation Address before Congress last July 24, 2006. They said they found explosives, firearms and a blueprint of the Batasan Complex in the safehouse.

Since their capture, some of the rebel officers have started writing essays for Baldonado and Sumiaono who remain in solitary confinement.

Solitary confinement

Sources said the Magdalo rebel officers were forced into signing a prepared affidavit that would name their alleged cohorts while they were under stress.

Baldonado and Sumiaono reportedly resisted implicating anyone, purportedly opposition figures for their escape, according to the sources.

"They are afraid for their family's safety because the people they are forced to implicate could get back at them," said one source.

Their wives claimed Baldonado and Sumiaono were being sequentially kept in small cells with a single window, a bed, toilet and a single dim bulb providing illumination.

They are not allowed to have their cells except for bath an hour a day to eat downstairs in a small mess hall with others.

They should see any other patients except the guard accompanying them.

The two officers are allowed to see visitors during weekends for half an hour. On the way in and from the visitors' room, the two are blindfolded and handcuffed, the wives said.

Sumiaono's mother and his husband looked "thin, pale, and very weak" when the last visited him.

Wilma Baldonado described her husband as "hasn't eaten well (this) last (week)."

During one visit, Baldonado's three-year-old son reportedly rushed into the room and was shocked to see his father handcuffed and blindfolded.

The wives said they were denied entry to the compound during Christmas Day because the camp was on "red alert."

Earlier, Army Judge Advocate Corps reportedly also being kept in solitary confinement at the ISG compound.

Capt. Jimmy Laraglet has reportedly been in solitary confinement since his arrest last April for alleged participation in the Feb. 24 failed coup plot.

He is the only one of the 30 officers undergoing court-martial for the coup plot who has not been transferred to the detention facility in Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal.

The Army did not give any reason why Laraglet has not been transferred to Camp Capinpin.

Sources said Laraglet was also being forced to run into "stone walls."

Palace suspends labor arbiter

MALACAÑANG HAS SUSPENDED FOR one month and one day a top official of the National Labor Relations Commission following a statement of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALN).

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita signed the resolution endorsing the recommendation of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission to suspend Labor Arbiter Hetty D. Isorena for violating section 8 of the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees and section 7 of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

"All public officials are mandated to submit their SALN every year. They should not only not blame their administrative staff for failure to remind them of their obligation," said PACC chair Constancio de Guzman.

The PACC was investigating Isorena for ill-gotten wealth raised by a complainant and they found that Isorena did not file his SALN in 2002.

Isorena's assets consisted of two parcels of land in Bulacan, a Dodge passenger van, 1977 Mitsubishi Galant and refurbished Jeep.

Isorena blamed his sickness, work overload and his office for his failure to file the SALN.

But De Guzman said that people who were monitoring DAUP applies. Rose were not obliged to remind public officers of their duty to file the SALN.

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PCGG wants all proceeds of PTIC

By Dexter L. Lucas

THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON Good Government yesterday asked the Sandiganbayan anti-graft court to order the Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp. (PTIC) to remit to the government all accumulated and unpaid dividends due it since 1986.

The shares of PTIC, at one time the biggest shareholder in the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), passed into government hands after the Supreme Court last year declared them part of the ill-gotten assets of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

In a statement issued yesterday the PCGG said it had asked the Sandiganbayan to order the PTIC "to account all cash and stock dividends declared and/or issued by PLDT in favor of PTIC from 1986 to the present time, corresponding to 111,413 shares of stock in Prime Holdings Corp. (PHC) that was declared by the Supreme Court in favor of the government."

It said that "the Republic of the Philippines, having been adjudged by final judgment as the rightful owner of the subject shares of stock, is consequentially entitled to the accumulated dividends" from the shares pertaining to the same shares."

A senior PCGG official said the accumulated cash dividends ... are including all stock dividends declared by PLDT—would be worth "at least P1.2 billion."

"This does not yet include dividends the company declared in 2006 and 2007," the official said, requesting anonymity because of ongoing negotiations to privatize the very controlling shares of PTIC stock.

All told, the unpaid cash and stock dividends due the government since the company was sequestered may reach P1 billion, according to PCGG estimates.

The block of PTIC shares, issued in the name of Prime Holdings Inc. (PHI), consists chiefly of 6.4 percent of PLDT and its related subsidiaries P11 and 2Vtelfon. PHI owns a 46-percent stake in PTIC.

The PCGG, which sequestered the shares after the 1986 Edsa People Power revolution, says control of them after a 20-year, four-way litigation between the government, the Marcos heirs and the Cojuangco and Farbregas families.

The case uncovered a complicated layer of holding companies that included the PTIC and the PHI, designed to conceal the true ownership of PLDT.

The PCGG said the 111,413 shares have already been transferred in the name of the Republic of the Philippines, in accordance with the SC's December 2006 decision, a writ of execution, and issuance of a PTIC stock certificate No. 046 in favor of the government on Dec. 19, 2006.

The PCGG move to collect the accumulated dividends provides a new twist in the unfolding controversy surrounding the planned sale of the PTIC shares, a transaction that has been denounced by opposition politicians claiming that the shares were being sold at a discount.

Peso closes stronger

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO CLOSED STRONGER YESTERDAY at 48.30 against the US dollar from Wednesday's 48.38 last trades as the currency succumbing to some profit-taking amid strong overseas Filipino workers' remittances.

The peso, now trading at nearly six-year highs, managed to edge out more gains against the dollar yesterday despite an upbeat business survey that showed up confidence in the US economy.

"The US dollar is now oversold. I think the (peso) rally is now unwarranted but because there's a thin corporate demand for dollars, it's still gaining," said Manolo Apostol, senior vice president of the Bank of Commercial Banking Group. "The market will likely trade in a tight range."

Apostol said the peso could push to 48.50 to 48.75 as the dollar over the short-term before recovering back to its 49.00 to 49.20 level.

But despite traders' expectation that the bullish outlook from GPWs will weaken any, the peso is seen getting sustained support from foreign funds creeping to the local stock market.

"The peso's steep increase over the past several months has generally been attributed to market forces. After all, the dollar has been taking a beating against major currencies resulting in appreciating local currencies across the region," said a yearend review by local economists Ilya Lozada-Hernando Ilya & Associates.

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GMA leaving for Switzerland, Kuwait soon

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE NEW YEAR HAS JUST BEGUN, AND President Macapagal Arroyo is going off again for yet another foreign trip, this time in Switzerland and Kuwait before the end of the month.

According to the Palace schedule being prepared for her visits, President Arroyo will be in Switzerland from Jan. 23-27 to join other world leaders for the annual World Economic Forum in Davos.

From there, the Chief Executive will go to Kuwait for a state visit starting Jan. 28.

At present time, the Palace has yet to get full details of the planned visits.

Mr. Arroyo has become the most traveled Philippine President since President Fidel Ramos.

Last year, the President was frequently away, making 14 countries in Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

Vacationing priest missing in Misamis

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—A CATHOLIC PRIEST assigned to Cebu has disappeared while vacationing in his hometown in Misamis Oriental Dec. 21.

Fr. Lude Bula is assigned with the Scalabrinian Missionary Seminary in Barangay Tuyan in Talisay, Cebu. He went home to Barangay San Juan in Balingasag, town Dec. 29 to attend his high school homecoming, which was held Dec. 30.

Josie Cabaldon Dalingan, a niece of Bula, told the Inquirer her uncle had told her the day after the homecoming that he was going to Mass a house in Jagumbing town in the said day.

She said Bula, 48, left their home in Balingasag around 9 p.m. but he failed to meet his destination.

"That was the last time we spoke and we never heard from him again," Dalingan said.

Insp. Faustino Bermio-Ochoa, Balingasag town police chief, said the last time he saw the priest was morning of Dec. 31.

She said Bula had celebrated a mass at the Sts. Rita Parish Church.

Supt. Lyndel Droguitsalis, Misamis Oriental police chief, told the Inquirer he had alerted police units in the province. Cesar Gamad-Alcasela, Inquirer Mindanao

Correction

IN THE JAN. 4 issue, a front-page story—"9 bronze killed, 18 injured in road crash"—carried a wrong dateline. The story was sent from Cagayan City—not Baguio City.

Readers may contribute reports for the attention of Rudolf Abraham, managing editor, by writing to the No. Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 6th floor, Media Center Building, Chino Roces Avenue Extension (Real), Makati City.

Study at an Australian University in Singapore

JCU

Palace took law into own hands, says VFACom ex

[illegible] p.1

"Isnilon was detained on an order by Makati City [illegible] Trial Court] Judge Benjamin Pozon. The order was being contested at the appellate court, and so it was [the latter] that should decide on that," Bayoko pointed out.

Why he ventured to know; did the executive branch bother to "intervene" by filing pleadings at the appellate court in support of Smith's petition to be transferred, "if they will let us take her into their own hands?"

Why 'recon'?

Paredes, a lawyer, also wondered why the appellate court considered the custody dispute already "moot" because of an agreement between foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney backing the transfer.

"What I know is that it would only become moot if Puton [whose order was being challenged] already changed his mind and has effected the transfer," he said.

Paredes' past statements on what had come to be known as the Subic rape case had drawn the ire of officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs and, at one point, administration lawmakers, Miriam Defensor-Santiago.

Both he had denied, gave rise to reports that the VFACom, an agency under the Office of the President, was on its way to being abolished.

But the office clearly has remained in operation. Paredes spoke with the bayonet yesterday from his VFACom desk in the DFA building in Pasay City.

He said the commission continued to operate on an annual budget of roughly P2 million from the Office of the President, serving as the body mandated to check on the Philippine and US governments' compliance with the VFA.

The commission is now "busy preparing for the next RP-US Balikatan exercises this year," he reported.

Paredes expressed that the VFACom at the court gallery during the marathon rape trial, and was once even quoted by media Pozon when the court had questions regarding the VFA.

VFA review

Conceding that "good lessons" have been learned from the Subic rape case that had thrust the ire of officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs and, at one point, administration law, Miriam Defensor-Santiago.

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HALTER SLAMS: Militant groups Bayanan ako allegedly [illegible] RP-US relations. They say they will raise the custody issue during the 12th Asean summit in Cebu City which starts on Jan. 11.

With Smith incarcerated at the Makati City Jail and his petition for retrieval pending at the appellate court, the US government announced the cancellation of this year's RP-US Balikatan war games.

'Stronger friendship'

Days later, the soldier was taken out of the city jail and moved to the US Embassy in the dead of night.

The US Embassy announced the conception of the Balikatan exercises.

In a statement he issued and later repeated in a news briefing, Bayoko said both the Philippine and US governments had hurried "good lessons" from the controversy.

"We believe that the Philippine-American ties has cemented, has grown stronger as we [earlier] the issues in the spirit of friendship," he said. "It is always in our interest to see to it that the rule of justice take their course."

Asked what lessons the Philippine government had learned from the rape case, Bayoko said: "We know first of all that we have to preserve the strategic relationship between our two countries.

"We believe that in the long term, this agreement would be mutually beneficial, but we have to be sensitive to certain issues."

To the question of whether the planned review was an acknowledgement that the VFA was disadvantageous to the Philippines, Bayoko would only say that any agreement, whether it was the VFA or not, should undergo periodic reviews.

He also said the government is headed to firm up its security arrangements with the United States, and pointed out that officials were glad that the forthcoming Balikatan war games would see US military personnel observing navigation rules while on Philippine soil.

Gathering momentum

A bipartisan move to review or abrogate the VFA is gathering momentum in both houses of Congress.

Following the call of Senate Minority Leader Francis Escudero and leftist lawmakers led by Rep. Satur Ocampo, to revisit the agreement, Cebu Representative Gwen and the House had decided to push a review.

"The sound of the House is to make a second look and that's not a substantive review of the provisions we deem are bigness, like the custody of convicted US personnel," said Carreon, chair of the House committee on foreign relations and cochair of the Legislative Oversight Committee on the VFA.

Senate President Manuel Villar, Senator Santiago, had "agreed that there is really a need to review the VFA to clarify certain provisions."

"We hope the US will listen to us, all we're asking of them is to negotiate with us to avoid any confusion," he said.

OPENLY CRITICAL: [illegible] the officialdom, VFA Executive Director [illegible] says that Smith's rape case had thrust the [illegible] appellate court [illegible] coercion and bullying.

Rebel Rep. Mar [illegible] House committee [illegible] Justice, backed the [illegible]

But he quickly [illegible] for the controversy [illegible] stirs who had tried to explain their ex

Lauro Legarda, the [illegible] co, and Senator [illegible] and Aquilino Pimentel [illegible]

The 10 who wa [illegible] Dennon Marcel [illegible]

Lawyers now focus on reversal of Smith's rape convic

[illegible] p.1

"We were supposed to get a ruling on Wednesday but we waited for a copy of the Court of Appeals decision on Smith's custody to check its implications on the custody arrangements. It was already late when we got a copy," Carpio said the reprieve.

Random checks

While Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, who is overseeing the inspection team's visit to the jail, earlier that "some 20 minutes" elapsed between his phone call and his arrival at the embassy gates.

He said he informed embassy authorities of his vehicle's license plate number beforehand, and was promptly allowed entry after "the usual security checks."

Carpio said they with less than an hour's notice, Smith's custodians would have less time to act in case they were allowing the Marine out of his 10-by-12-foot room in the training building, in violation of the custody agreement between Philippine and US authorities.

"When I got there, [Smith] was with a group of three pastors. I asked them why they were there and they told me they were giving him some form of counseling," Carpio said, adding:

"They said they'd been counseling him long before."

Carpio said he stayed for only 30 minutes. "I interrupted the counseling session. I let them resume after he was re-briefed."

By Carpio's account, Smith, dressed in a yellow T-shirt and khaki shorts, said he was expecting his Mindoro-based parents to come for a visit before the end of the month.

Carpio said his impression was that US authorities were bowing to the custody agreement and were keeping Smith in strict detention.

During the yearlong trial, Smith and three other US Marines accused along with him of raping "Nicole," a Filipino woman, on Nov. 1, 2005, were held inside the Jusmag building.

Appellant's brief

The three others were eventually acquitted by Judge Puzon, but Carpio said even they were being detained at the US military base in Okinawa, Japan.

Smith's lawyer Justinianos said the Marine was "glad" about the Court of Appeals' Wednesday decision saying it would do nothing about the custody dispute because Smith's Dec. 29 transfer to the US Embassy from the Makati City Jail (where he had been committed by Judge Puzon) had rendered the matter "moot."

"While our petition [for a temporary restraining order on Smith's incarceration at the city jail] was denied, we got what we wanted and [it's just satisfied that] we did ... Now we are just waiting for the notice from the Court of Appeals requiring us to file the appellant's brief," Justinianos said.

Meanwhile, he was referring to a document asking the assigned division of the appellate court "to set aside" Smith's judgment of conviction.

According to Justinianos, the appeal will move as soon as the court gives the legal team the go-signal to file the brief, with a 45-day deadline.

For procedure, he said, the Office of the Solicitor General shall then file its answer to the brief as counsel for the people in the criminal case.

The court, however, has yet to assign the case to a division, he said.

Heather Pazzo's court ruse Nicole's camp may intervene in the paper against paper battle, Justinianos said, citing jurisprudence limiting the private complainant's role in the appeals process to "seeking indemnity (and) not demanding punishment of the accused."

[illegible]'s camp] can only intervene if the Solicitor General agrees with our position that my client committed no crime because that will be the only time that his claim to damages will be jurisdictional," Justinianos said.

Ursua's moves

Justice of the Institution, Nicole's lawyer Evalyn Ursua filed on Tuesday a special appearance before the appellate court seeking the outright dismissal of Smith's appeal and an arrest warrant against him.

She cited Smith's midnight "escape" from the city jail last Dec. 29 as basis.

"The court has the power to dismiss the appeal based on the rule that when a convicted criminal escapes prison, an appeal should be dismissed ... And Daniel Smith not only escaped, he [also] fled to a foreign country — the US territory, which at US territory — and that court has [no jurisdiction over him," Ursua said.

"The Court of Appeals has no more business entertaining his appeal and his conviction must be declared final. Our position is, there should be no more appeal and the court should order arrest on location because that is void, given that the Court of Appeals has lost jurisdiction over Smith," she said.

Another ace

As another ace against Smith, Ursua is also preparing to supplement a petition she filed earlier for Suzette Nicole on June 19, 2006, asking the it found to rule on the constitutionality of the RP-US Visiting Agreement.

The petition questions the validity [illegible] Paragraph 6 of the VFA, the [illegible] the custody dispute over Smith.

The provision gives the US government custody of any American soldier [illegible] before a Philippine court for the duration [illegible] proceedings upon its request.

It also states that judicial proceedings [illegible] except the time for appeal, shall be [illegible] within a year; otherwise, the [illegible] "shall be released of any custody" to produce the accused [illegible] courts.

Ursua said her submission to the [illegible] would ask the high court "to declare [illegible] transfer of Smith to Philippine custody [illegible] "to declare illegal and unconstitutional [illegible] agreement between Philippine and US Ambassador Kenney, which Philippine and US [illegible] has involved as basis for Smith's [illegible] custody.

Strong public opinion

But according to Amado Valdez, [illegible] the University of the East College [illegible] only "strong public opinion" can [illegible] the US findings to return Smith to [illegible] of Philippine authorities, [illegible] the appellate court's decision on [illegible] the Philippines' "exclusive jurisdiction over the soldier."

Cops find witnesses disputing Abra Governor Valera's story

[illegible] p.1

Patubay 65, who was arrested three days after the killings, had confessed he had acted on a "contract" for the slayings that carried with the P5-million contract on Hernandez. He and Jaspe had told police that Valera was the brains behind the assassination.

Valera has denied the charge. Groups for Patubay, the rest of the suspects are at large.

But for his former chauffeur that the information was still "circumstantial evidence" requiring corroborative details.

On Friday, the governor and his body guards were arrested on board the Subic bus over a traffic violation. Witter found a stash of firearms and a grenade in the vehicle, prompting them to file weapons possession charges against Valera and his guards.

Same woman

Valera, 61, was detained on Dec. 29 and was released on Jan. 3 after posting bail in a Quezon City court.

On his humor and investigators viewed Valera's Chevrolet SUV in Juan Luna line on Shaw Boulevard, from which it was purchased.

The investigation revealed Valera bought the SUV for P1.058 million and personally paid the full amount on Nov. 30, 2006. At least two dealership employees said Valera was accompanied by four men and a woman, who described as "tall, mestiza, with long hair and dimples, sexy and with a ring.

Upon being shown photos of Dimples, the two employees said she looked like the woman with Valera.

The same employees positively identified Jaspe, a former vice mayor of Abra's

From yap to growl, device dogs intruders, jailbreakers

[illegible] p.1

[illegible] — to see if an animal is responding to a threat instead of just routinely woofing — the company aims to replace or supplement expensive electronic surveillance systems.

"There is currently very little utilization of the watchdog's early warning capabilities," says the privately owned manufacturer Bio-Sensor Technologies, based in the Israeli town of Petah Tikva, on its website.

The company — which says dogs have better night vision than humans and a vastly superior sense of smell and hearing — used computers to analyze 150 barks and found dogs of all breeds and sizes barked the same alarm when they sensed a threat.

If the dogs sense an intruder, dozens of sensors around the facility pick up their "alarm bark" and alert the human operators in the control room.

No escape attempts since

Dubbed "Dogiatel," the Dog Bio Security system is in place at the high-security Ofeket Prison, which houses military prisoners, installations, farms, ranches, gangers and its Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Ofeket Prison installed the system last year to supplement its existing network of electronic fences and human guards, prison officer Ronen Morin told Reuters.

Now Ben, a brown American Staffordshire Terrier, Shanti, a white Canaan, and 27 other dogs guarding the prison are tracked by sensors to alert guards to any attempted breakout in the jail, which houses about 1,000 prisoners, including Israelis and Palestinians.

There have been no escape attempts since the system was installed, but Morin is concerned it wards off the aerial prisoners as militants had been able to escape "because dogs barked but no one was sent to the guards."

During a demonstration, an alarm wailed as Ben and Fanny raced, growling and snarling, alongside one of the facility's metal fences, which a man in a brown uniform was trying to scale from the other side.

Not foolproof

Officers in a small basement office nearby watched on a surveillance video and spoke into their walkie-talkies as a wall of computer screens flashed in red: "Dog alarm to Sector 2."

Seconds later, several prison guards, wielding clubs, raced to the scene and tackled the man to the ground.

The dog bark-sensor is just one of a batch of innovative security systems to emerge from Israel, which features mazing arms further and last December had emerged as "the go-to country for antiterror technologies."

By monitoring not just the dogs' barks, but also their physiological response — like heart rates — the Dogiatel joins a trend for computer systems building [illegible] and knowledge that humans [illegible]

Another Israeli example, from [illegible] Detection Systems, offers [illegible] checkpoints a computer quiz that [illegible] guards if it wonders there is unarmed [illegible] response to perceived [illegible] questions.

However, Dogiatel is not [illegible] When first set up at Ofeket Prison [illegible] many installations and farm in [illegible] the dogs triggered several [illegible]

"The dogs could two to three [illegible] ... they must get to know their [illegible]," said Daniel Arbel, chief executive [illegible] of Mester Shalom, the municipal [illegible] town of the Israeli town of Rehovot [illegible]

Lena said he had installed the system [illegible] to replace guards.

Golda Alon, an official at Shalit in [illegible] a large Israeli security company that [illegible] prison private guards and equipment [illegible] agree relying on dogs as a [illegible] of defense.

"Dogs are excellent at spotting [illegible] — they are well-trained and have [illegible] sharpened sense of smell than humans," she said. "But people can identify people

SECURITY SYSTEM: Suspected as an Israeli firm aware to that policemakers and corrupters will find a guard dog's bark worse than its bite. A prison warden demonstrates how the technology works.

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A Commission
- Zoilo Paredes
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"Since the US Embassy is passionate about the transfer, the possibility of relocating [Shariel] to jail ... is very evident and we deem it a strong political operation," Roilo said in an interview over mobile radio.

Velcro, a former commissioner of the Presidential Commission on the Wife, said the Arroyo administration created "a big problem" when it removed Shariel from the city jail without waiting for the decision of the Court of Appeals.

He said that if the US Embassy under Ambassador Kenney wanted to help Philippine authorities identify the murder's motive, it could consider "surrendering" supervision and control of Shariel's detention quarters to Philippine authorities.

Said Velcro: "US authorities could assure their sovereignty in this portion of their territory. That will remove the situation—where before, they asked us to move custody [over Shariel], now, to comply with the court decision, they should waive especially since Shariel's detention quarters [are] in an Embassy."

"Another option is to use a house near Forbes Park of another place near the Ambassador's residence and give the security and control of that place to Philippine authorities.

"The third option is for the US to return Shariel to us." With a report from Armand A. Nimmo

owes, as one of Velcro's companions who, they said, was always permitted Isabel Sirera and was holding a black-back bag.

In his house and investigators would invite Gloucester "over" to help in the probe. Outgoing CIDG chief police Director Jesse Rebaza said the former beauty queen was not a suspect.

looking at them and talking to them, and they are more inclined to catch them."

Better in pairs

Brad Brand, manager of a store at Kilburn Street, a commercial farm, had the canoes installed two months ago. He said he has had dogs catch brown rat, but because one signals to the other if an intruder appears, so two were placed to guard the cabins.

The dogs sent in the alarm system were rescued from shelters, Rio Grove chief executive officer Ayat Lobert said, adding researchers asked for them to be trained professionally first.

Rebel Private's dogs live in individual kennels. Several times a day, they are let out in paved buildings, where they are unleashed in a fenced compound.

At Kilburn Grove, dogs Chief and Lola are kept on a long chain and are released to run around the farm several times a day. The dogs guarding Mount Robin are also trained.

Israeli animal rights activists said they were little about the system but it was preferable for dogs to be outdoors and unchained.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN REFORM
Region III
Provincial Agrarian Reform Office
Aringayan City

November 30, 2006

Notice of Coverage

The following landholdings in the province of Cotabato, the landowners of which are considered absentee, are covered by the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP):

	Land Owners	Title No.	Lot & Survey No.	Area	Location
1.	Orlando Dayle	P-3941	300, Pls-59	1.0730	Ibrahim, Rid.
2.	Marina Gee	P-18858	400, Pls-59	14.0738	Ibrahim, Rid.
3.	Candida Chan	T-44500	Lot 1471/1	11.7300	Kalaisan, Rid.
4.	Leo Reilo	T-40671	114, G-5, Pls-10-00582	11.0848	Kalaisan, Rid.
5.	Leo Reilo	T-40670	114, G-1, Pls-10-00583	28.0000	Kalaisan, Rid.
6.	Lee Inc.	T-39913	136, E, Cad-6099	11.4436	Kalayunan, Rid.
7.	Lee Inc.	T-39913	136-A, Cad-6099	11.4436	Kalayunan, Rid.
8.	Solito Chan	T-23942	R-IV-01431	00.3072	Sikilan, Kid.
	Arsen	T-24147	Lot 1109-B, Pls-10-101	14.9852	Sikilan, Kid.
		T-24139	Lot 1109-A, Pls-10-101	24.6972	Sikilan, Kid.
9.	Rolando Mendoza	P-39998	15, Bsd-11021	11.4300	Mawading, Rid.
10.	Pacifico Mendoza, Jr.	P-37144	32, Bsd-11021	11.0400	Mawading, Rid.
11.	Eduardo Mendoza	P-35142	106, 96, 97, Bsd-11021	11.0139	Mawading, Rid.
12.	Eliseo Perez	P-32984	601, Pls-716	0.7500	Macopa, Arakan
13.	Reinaldo Parrer	P-49021	602, Pls-716	0.7500	Macopa, Arakan
14.	Gabriel Cayre	T-11325	972, Pls-498	0.9997	Sinolumar, Ara.
15.	Leni Sala Cruz	T-11324	682, Pls-498	0.7500	do.
16.	Rosanga Mesangkay	T-11271	972, Pls-498	0.7500	do.

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Provincial Agrarian Reform Office V

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OPINION

Have an your feedback: inquirer.opinion@inquirer.com.ph; website: http://www.inq7.net/

Ronald Saulbrook@inquirer.com.ph; website: http://www.inq7.net/

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Scofflaw

EDITORIAL

OF COURSE, JUSTICE SECRETARY RAUL GONZALEZ would shrug off moves to dethrone him. He's been down that road before, and it didn't stop his political career—or prevent his appointment to the Arroyo Cabinet. His fortunately—even notoriously—combative personality requires him to weave in any and all criticism.

But his sneer the other day, directed at media, truly boggles the mind. When he was asked to comment on criticisms that the transfer to US custody of Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith was rushed, the justice secretary replied, "My golly, it's better that way. What would they want? That we will just let the judgment become final and then pardon him?"

What did Gonzalez mean? Are we to gather from his outburst that the Arroyo administration's game plan was to pardon Smith? Was that Malacañang's real game? Was it the US Embassy's ultimate demand?

Until Gonzalez broached the idea, no one was saying that a presidential pardon for Smith was in the cards—not publicly, anyway. A pardon would have been a non-solution to a genuine issue; it would have been too much. At least, that is what any reasonable survey of the situation would indicate, but then Gonzalez isn't famous for being a reasonable man.

The justice secretary's legal reasoning seems to go like this: Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon says that to the absence of a mutually agreed detention facility, Smith has to be held in an ordinary Philippine jail. The US government and the executive department both disagree with Pozon, primarily because Pozon believes the judicial process ended when he handed down the verdict on the case. Still, the Philippine and American governments negotiated a place of detention, which would be the US Embassy, until Smith's appeals were resolved. But instead of allowing the Court of Appeals to resolve Smith's appeal for detention at the embassy, Gonzalez preempted the process by engineering Smith's midnight transfer from the Makati City Jail to the embassy. With the connivance not only of the interior secretary and the executive secretary, but President Macapagal-Arroyo no less. And all because, in Gonzalez's mind, this latest version of a calibrated preemptive response is better than trusting the courts, because the only corrective option left would have been a pardon?

But as we've said, whoever said a pardon was, or should ever have been, to the cards? Time and again, the public has bristled at the hand-headed assumptions of Gonzalez and company that the only way out of a legal problem is to act rough and brazen out the questions that ensue. The justice secretary pours in the "emotional" shoots by the public without pausing to think how much he has contributed to inviting such anger.

Webster's defines "scofflaw," the word used by former Sen. Rene Saguisag to describe Gonzalez, as someone who is "a contemptuous law violator." It is an apt description of the justice secretary. When Pozon made his decision, he was acting within his authority; and to be fair, the executive branch, in consenting Pozon along from similar to that of the US Embassy, was doing its job, too, being a party, with the US government, to the Visiting Forces Agreement. And certainly the US military had all the right to cancel joint military exercises to show its displeasure over the local interpretation of the VFA. What is objectionable was the way the administration panicked, and the means by which Gonzalez tried to save the day.

But that is the way he has tried to save the day for his boss, each and every time they found themselves in a legal pickle: Do something quickly, even surreptitiously, so that the courts will be left with no choice but to say what's done is done. That isn't justice. It isn't even the law. It's opportunism of the worst kind, because it serves partisan political interests but not the national interest.

In a fit of pique, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo changed the date on which we celebrate Independence Day because the United States was giving him a rough time securing benefits for our war veterans. He turned his statesmen into an opportunity for nationalism, and it cost him what all presidents crave most: a state visit to Washington. Thus does politics accidentally become something approximating statesmanship. Posterity has approved the change of our Independence Day. But it will not look kindly on his daughter's latest demonstration of how low her opinion is of the judiciary.

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US citizenship waiting for GMA et al?

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

IT IS NOT TRUE THAT AMERICAN CITIZENship might not be granted to President Macapagal-Arroyo and her legal advisers when they are charged out of the Philippines by angry Filipinos. But some to think of it, GMA and some of her Cabinet members (Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, Presidential Legal Adviser Sergio Apostol, Solicitor General Antonio Nachura, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, Interior Undersecretary Hector Corpus, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, etc.) are not more American than Fil-ipino. It seems they love American rapist Daniel Smith more than they love his Filipino victim and the son of the Philippine people, judging from the way they hastened the sovereignty of the Philippines for the sake of Smith.

But it is not true either that a community for the Filipino President Arroyo is being built in Missouri, the home town of Smith. Although those pseudo-Americans who can afford to live in America often when they have done it seems that natives of Missouri prevented when they heard of the plan. They would be severely debt, they claim. "If they can betray their fellow Filipinos," they said, "they can also betray us."

Then if the people of Missouri do not want it, country is the greatest sin that can be committed by man. If Rodolfo Biazon was bumped by sisters against humanity, what should be the punishment for people who commit crimes against their own country and people? A question only for place in hell.

* * *

We don't really have to wait until lightning unleashed by an angry God strikes the bench to consign the betrayal. We can punish these sinners—during the elections in May.

Many of the people in the position where will run for public office—some for the Senate, some for the House of Representatives, others for local government positions. And remember their names, and remember not to vote for them. If they run for dogcatcher, don't vote for them. If they run against any of them, vote for the dog. Dogs are more loyal than they.

Include among the names to remember (to be the sisters to the Kamikazes during the elections) those of the congressmen who tried to railroad Con-ass through Congress secretly. To refresh your memories, I will mention the more notorious ones: Jose de Venecia, Edcel Lagman, Luis Villafuerte, Prospero Nograles, Prospero Pichay, Douglas Cagas (you may add other names). Remember, do not vote for them. They don't deserve it.

* * *

After seeing the beautiful multi-colored fireworks lighting up the night sky last New Year's Eve and reading in the papers that injuries caused by firecrackers rose by 61 percent, it occurred to me that we could make every New Year's Eve safer and still more beautiful and merry-simply by banning pyrotechnics in favor of those that rise in the sky and burst into beautiful colorful displays. Stop making the noisemakers that explode on the ground like the evangelist, Pepe-Hun, whistle bomb, booming, pla-pla, etc. Outlaw also those many injuries ever caused by those explosives, and many of the victims were children because it is children who love and handle them. If the factories don't produce them anymore, nobody will get hurt, right?

Factories will make more money producing and selling the pyrotechnics that burst in the air (with the exception of the kwitis which has the bad habit of prematurely exploding on the ground). Factories make the noisemakers presumably for variety and for the children because they are cheaper.

If it is necessary to pass laws or ordinances banning the manufacture and sale of explosives, then let's do it. It will save many fingers, the hearing and limbs will still make plenty of money on the sales, more beautiful pyrotechnics.

For noisemakers, why not record the noise during one New Year's Eve evening on get the sound-tracks of battles from war movies and documentaries and play them at full volume on-stereo or on any public address system on New Year's Eve? It'll be noisy but safer, cheaper and-sounds every year. A recording company that makes and sells compact discs with battle-sound-tracks can make a killing every Christmas season.

* * *

With the New Year, jockeying for the top positions in the Bureau of Customs and the-rest of Internal Revenue is again stirring up. Anonymous messages have been after the pos-ition of Commissioner Napoleon Morales and Jose Mario Buting since last year. They are the reasons for the black propaganda appearing in media against the two top tax collectors. Why are these two positions the most sought after government jobs?

Commissioner Morales's performance of Morales is superlative. Actual collections have surpassed the target, as Morales himself-we have enumerated on the so-called "loss taxes" smuggled into the country supposedly by a company linked to Morales. However, the company, Goldenrod, is said to have been a fictitious address and was accredited in 2003, before Morales was named Customs chief. The agency which should have checked Golden Ark is the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (CIIS), the group in charge of collecting against smuggling and pilferage. But ironically, the commissioner would-be comes from the CIIS.

At the BIR, a city treasurer and a relative of a friend of GMA are both after Buting's post, so that his failure to achieve unrealistically high collections is being pulled in media. Like Morales, however, Buting has posted record-high revenue collections.

CA verdict not the end of VFA debate

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

BOTH SIDES HAVE CLAIMED TO BE VINDIcated by the Court of Appeals decision on Wednesday, but the verdict does not by itself close the debate provoked by Malacañang's earlier decision to return Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith to US custody.

Years are actually three-count cases that have arisen from "blanket" rape acquittals in November 2005. The first was the criminal proceeding in the Makati regional trial court before Judge Benjamin Pozon. In December 2006, Pozon convicted Smith of rape but acquitted his three co-accused, and sent Smith to the Makati City Jailhouse the objections of his defense counsel who insisted on continuing ID custody.

A second case was filed before the Supreme Court in June 2006, while the criminal proceeding was on-going, this time by Smith's counsel, to challenge the validity and application of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) itself. That case remains pending to this day.

The third was filed in the Court of Appeals by Smith's counsel in December 2006, after his conviction, and focuses solely on custody: Smith insisting that he should remain in US premises to the Philippines under the VFA.

(From televised news reports, there is apparently a fourth case. After Smith was "spirited out" of the Makati City Jail and into the Embassy, Smith's counsels, Gladys Ulmas and Harry Roque, charged the responsible Philippine government officials with contempt of court. It seems that they filed this as an independent complaint, rather than as a mere incident of the appellate court proceedings.)

The court verdict was deftly written by Justice Apolinario D. Bruselas, himself a former prosecutor and trial judge who taught Criminal Procedure at the UP College of Law before he joined the court. The court "reversed" the Smith petition. The bad point to make is to say that he be returned to US custody, but that is now a done act. On the other hand, the court upheld Pozon's ruling that the Philippines retains custody over Smith until the two countries signed a proper detention agreement as required by the VFA, as foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney now have done.

Below is the relevant portion of the 1998 Chapter V on Criminal Jurisdiction, this and pieces of this hopefully have been cited elsewhere, but they are so central to the debate that the reader must see the relevant fully.

Paragraph 1 says: "The custody of any US personnel over whom the Philippines is to exercise jurisdiction shall immediately reside with US military authorities, if they so request, from the commission of the offense until completion of all judicial proceedings. US military authorities shall, upon formal notification by the Philippine authorities and without delay make such personnel available to those authorities in time for any investigative or judicial proceedings relating to the offense with which charges has been charged. In extraordinary cases, the Philippine Government shall present its position to the US Government regarding custody, which the US Government shall take into full account. In the event Philippine judicial proceedings are not completed within one year, the US shall be relieved of any obligation under this paragraph. The one-year period will not include the time necessary to appeal. . . ."

Paragraph 10 says: "The entitlement or detention by Philippine authorities of US personnel shall be suspended once it is determined that appropriate Philippine and US authorities . . .

One debate focuses on the term "all judicial proceedings." Smith insists that his conviction is not yet final, and he must therefore remain in US custody until he has exhausted his appeals. Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, together with former Senators Jovito R. Salonga and Wigberto Tañada, support the view (affirmed by Pozon and Bruselas) that it pertains to the trial stage alone. Indeed, paragraph 8 says that "judicial proceedings" must be completed within one year, and from prosecutor to judge that the one-year period does not include the time for appeal. Bruselas pointed out the irony: Smith would limit judicial proceedings to the trial when he insists on the one-year deadline, but would expand it to the appeal when he claims the pending US remedy.

Two, after conviction, paragraph 10 would require that "appropriate Philippine and US authorities" agree on the facilities for the confinement of US personnel. Pozon invoked this, saying there was no such agreement then, and that an agreement later signed by the Department of Justice—and not by the Department of Foreign Affairs—did not satisfy that requirement. Malacañang now invokes the same clause, saying that the Romulo-Kenney agreement was precisely what the VFA required.

I lay the blame squarely at the feet of the lawyers who advised the Philippine Senate during the ratification of the VFA. The VFA was a sell-out, the Republic demanded to "prevent [my] in position to the US . . . which the US shall take into full account," even for crimes and trials done on Philippine soil. The text was retained, as it were, deliberately to deny the hard choices, and today the debacle-that means a deep price. We prosecuted Smith in the name of the "People of the Philippines," properly and solely on the question of his guilt or innocence, yet now we have bargained away that moral sovereignty, and Smith is happier for the protection and freedom given to one who had been convicted along.

* * *

Comments to panalangan@gmail.com

'Blue Danube Waltz' celebrates EU expansion

ANALYSIS

Amanda Darrach

THE OFFICIAL DITTY OF BELGIAN EUROPEAN Commissioner Erkki Liikanen, the Finnish Minister for Enterprise and Information Society, is a jaunty, bouncy little number called "Blue Danube Waltz" by Austrian composer Johann Strauss II in the two new members of the EU in Vienna's fully packed Musikverein, home to the Philharmonic in the traditional finale, the musicians closed the concert with the popular "Blue Danube Waltz", to the rhythmic clapping of the audience.

The celebration of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania as members of the EU with the "Blue Danube Waltz" had both Soviet-era cultural and historical symbolism. The European Union's enlargement to the east has been a long time coming, the Velga River in Russia, connects Bulgaria and Romania with other EU member states and makes access for most members permanent link to the heart of Europe. Their accession extended the borders of the three EU citizens then restricted to the Black Sea.

The Danube originates in the Black Forest in Germany, flowing eastward, passing through several Central and Eastern European countries before emptying into the Black Sea through the Danube Delta in Romania. It flows through 10 countries: Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and the Ukraine.

The New Year's concert was one of the most sparkling performances of the Philharmonic in recent years. This concert has been the most watched having rotated event in the Musikverein, with, hosting the New Year since the tradition of the concert of Viennese waltzes was initiated by conductor Clemens Krauss on Sep. 31, 1939, exclusively on Austrian national radio station.

The last New Year concert was a special event. Zubin Mehta conducted for the fourth time the last time in 1991, 1995 and 1997). As time goes, his mere conductors alternately directed the Philharmonic, among them Lorin Maazel, Claudio Abbado and Riccardo Muti.

This year's concert's has most number of the Strauss family, including four Strauss surname brothers, who have been overshadowed by Johann Strauss, father and son. Six of the lesser known compositions of the Strauss family were performed for the first time in the concert. Another featured work was "Efferdutz" by Joseph Hellmesberger, Jr.

The admission of Bulgaria and Romania marked the completion of the latest round of enlargement of the European Union, bringing the number of member states up to 27. There have been six enlargements since the EU's creation in 1958, with the admission of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark in 1973, following the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951. The biggest wave of enlargement took place on May 1, 2004, when 10 new members were admitted: the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. In the enlargement, the EU admitted eight new members of the east territory in the Mediterranean, expanding its total membership of 15 to 25.

Romania represents the EU's largest threat ever, with its 22 million citizens comprise the largest population to enter the union since Poland joined three years ago. Its accession expands the external EU border by 1,462 kilometers, along the Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia and the Black Sea. With the latest additions, the EU population increases to nearly 485 million, representing 23 official languages, ranging from Gaelic to Greek.

The entry of Romania marks a symbolic final break from a difficult past. Romania suffered one of Eastern Europe's most brutal communist dictatorships under Nicolae Ceausescu before its true overthrowing a bloody revolution in 1989.

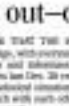
Fireworks and cheers celebrated the entry of Romania and Bulgaria, the last of the Eastern countries that used to be behind the Soviet Iron Curtain to make a break from their communist past and join the democracies and market economies of the EU. They are now the EU's poorest members, with per capita wealth amounting to only a third of the EU average. They hope that EU membership will help clamp down their rising standards and launch their economies toward prosperity.

For Romania and Bulgaria, accession is only the beginning of the arduous climb toward attaining the basic standards set by the EU for its latest members, requiring them to broaden and democratize state administrations, fight corruption and organized crime, strengthen democratic institutions, to have relatively open market economies and to lift their economic output close to the level of other EU economies where they have to draw. Romania is the least developed member state with widespread poverty and an underdeveloped infrastructure.

The entry of the two Balkan countries comes as the EU is experiencing expansion fatigue following the enlargements in 2004. Further expansion has come to a pause because of fears that the EU might already be overstretched by its previous enlargement, and to the new members. The economies has heightened fears that unrestricted migration from poor members to the rest would flood the EU with much paid migrant workers competing for jobs, undermining its social standards. The unrestricted migration poses problems for Bulgarian migrant workers in Western Europe, competing for jobs with more skilled Eastern European labor and especially with Polish medical workers who are much in demand in Western Europe.

Comment to: amdarrach@freenet.com.au

In–and out–of touch



PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

WE LIKE TO THINK THAT THE WHOLE WORLD HAS shrunk to a small village, with everyone becoming accessible through the Internet and information only a few mouse clicks away. Not quite, not for us. It reminded me of that one more with a paradoxical situation where we are still be as terribly out of touch with each other, and at times when we most need to be reached.

First, it was on BBC that I first got the news about the fire in the Ninoy Cky Aquino's airport, now renamed by Executive. I quickly switched to CNN, and then to ABC to try to get more news, but there wasn't the same-know information as on BBC. In fact, all three stations seemed to be using the same reports, with the same anchors, down to the same body front of jeans. ABC eventually had a telephone interview with Ormoc's mayor, who said that he hadn't been able to locate the owner of the department store; in fact, he wasn't even sure who the owner was.

Drama is a day and one's recently isolated, but the stress-inducing situation could have much more needs to be done to keep Filipinos in touch. We watched, in real time, 18 planes boarding Baghdad and military tanks rolling over Bangkok as a coup unfolded, yet when local news exploded, it just took three hours for any information to come.

At times, too, it is the reporters who are the source and focus of the story, as when they got the full pressure of the damage done, of the fears lost. Not all the talk about small villages where everyone knows each other, no one seems to figure out just how many people die or disappear in a typhoon or an earthquake.

Tsunami

It was later on Dec. 26, and again on BBC, that I first got news about the earthquake in southern Taiwan, together with a warning that the earthquake set off a 100-meter high tsunami that was headed for eastern Philippines.

This alerted me to the need to start doing my own assessment. Again, I switched to ABC several times but there was nothing about the tsunami even as both CNN and BBC kept saying they would monitor the situation. I went to sleep about midnight, still without news.

The next morning I was relieved to find out that the tsunami didn't materialize. What's shocking, or scary, I did have a message from a friend in California, who had attended a news bulletin from international SOS insurance that had the headline: "Tsunami this Northern Philippines."

So there are perils, too, about being in touch, especially when it means getting misinformation. I did read in the papers that there had been some panic in some towns in Davao and in Basil, where residents got news about a tsunami threat.

Both were no less. Exaggerated information creates rumors and rumors, no less, are having information panic in a home's way as well. When if a tsunami had indeed built up and reached the Philippines? We've had drills for tsunami and other natural disasters, but whether a reliable information system in place—all those drills will be for nothing.

The Philippines, in fact, needs a reliable information system and should be putting out periodic updates, with assessments on what to do. We hope the cell phone companies can pitch in by sending official bulletins from Pagasa or other government agencies, to include warnings not to panic.

Last year, I signed up for a free e-mail service, advertised in Silicon Valley as providing worldwide email. So early as Nov. 28, I received a bulletin from there saying that there was a 25-percent chance that "buried" (their name "burning") would strike the Philippines in about 96 hours. I contributed to get daily updates until Nov. 30, when the replacement finally arrived. The service proved useless, except in the Philippines that were going to be affected. We can and should tap into more national resources for information.

Low-speed hi-speed

Now, the local problem is getting those bulletins, and also that about the quality of our Internet access. For some bad it seems that we're getting worse in the Philippines. I pay P1,000 a month for a DSL connection through PLDT that's down half of the time I try to connect. The more than I do get a connection, it crawls at snail's pace. Many of my friends have given up on PLDT and switched to other providers, but PLDT keeps raging against hope that PLDT will improve.

Because of the difficulties with PLDT's DSL, I got one of those Wellnets wireless PCMCIA cards from Smart, originally happening Smart and PLDT are one and the same. Philippine Islands are now covered by Smart's cellphone system and connect to Smart's satellites. Again, it's been purgatory trying to get good connections, although in fairness, I have to say the connections are more reliable, but they also tend to plod along.

What do I do when both DSL and wellbeam fail? Go back to old dial-up modem connecting. It works, and sometimes I think it's actually faster than the so-called high-speed connections.

Last year, during trips to Thailand and Vietnam, I had high-speed Internet connections in three-star hotels and they were not that expensive. There's no excuse for not having reasonable Internet access in economical many of major cities. Eventually, as most national businesses took around the different countries for investments opportunities, they're going to compare the reliability of Internet connections in different countries. We'll take points there, thinking there's a few more members than are already low ratings.

Ghosts

Shown in the 21st century—and in the US Embassy? The Internet quoted Fr. James Reuter, who has been visiting Leyte Gil. Daniel Smith at the embassy as saying that Smith was "not willing to go second to" the Filipino type since as well as the guards were complaining of "ghosts" in the room where they were being held in custody. It was amusing thinking about those brave Marines being so spooked, but never fear, Staten Reuter has daily blessed the room.

Meanwhile, we natives should probably be more in touch with reality and think about exercising other more real ghosts. When Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol announced yesterday that we had no choice but to turn over Smith to the US Embassy because "we are still economically dependent on America," he evokes one those old ghosts that we thought we've exorcised in the Second World War II, when the Americans are not solely dependent on territorial financial aid if we didn't control special commercial privileges in them. With the country in ruins, we gave in.

The ghosts were revived again in 1951 when our laws negotiated with the Americans on their military bases. In the end, we said no to the bases, a way of exorcising the ghosts of colonialism. Alas, we then agreed on the Visiting Forces Agreement, and the same sets of developments with Smith's custody show how the ghosts of the past continue to haunt us. Is that living in ready, or out of touch?

Aguinaldo's decree on young love

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

MAYE SAO, WEEN I WAS STILL SEARCHING for articles in Philippine history on which to build a research on towns and develop a course, I thought of writing on Philip V, the 16th-century Spanish monarch whose name now defines an era in country and people. I read that he lived an almost monastic existence in the glass tomb due to El Escorial outside Madrid, where he spent his working hours perusing very papers and ruminating with the collected of reports. Philip lived a life of seclusion and personality that required being physically present in a Spanish archive and learning to read 16th century western Spanish with all its short cuts and abbreviations. I found my quickly and shifted to something equally interesting, Philippine history.

Fine, I did Basil, and put him in course by narrating about the late 19th century Philippines. I moved on to the Philippine Revolution, and eventually the Philippine American war.

Looking back on two decades of research, I realized that I thrived best in the archives and libraries. As the late Teodoro Agoncillo used to say, "Yes document, no history." What about gaps in the documents, or different ways of reading one document? There always is something new to be found in archives.

Basil: to be past scribbled a great deal because they didn't have cell phones and the Internet. Not does are notes less done days, but rather very little hand ways is left behind for historians to work on, and this can be both good and bad depending on how one looks at it. For example, people often to remember life in the past through artifacts memorabilia from earth and sea, the American does likewise going through boxes of the past in archive search. In my work, I have gone through many documents, letters and diaries that paint a direct picture. Sometimes there are other documents available like laws and decrees. Laws are not the best engaging papers to read, particularly if there are numbers and you have little or no legal training. Yet I have had the privilege of interviewing lawyers and clerks from the Agoncillo government that provide an idea of their world and their concerns.

Browsing through the dust volume of "The Philippine Insurrection Against the United States," by Senate Document No. 213, compiled by J.B.M. Taylor, I came across a decree issued in Malolos on Sept. 17, 1898 concerning women, under the age of consent, who resisted to marry against the wishes of their parents. I wonder how we go about the these cases, but the process is clearly outlined in the documents signed by Emilio Aguinaldo that begins:

"Taking into consideration the many questions submitted to this honorable tribunal with regard to the betrothal of the observed for the custody of young girls, and the abduction of the same against the will of their parents. Considering that a systematic and unfounded opposition on the part of the parents to the marriage of their daughters causes in most cases their fall, with grave injury to public morals. Considering that it is the unquestionable duty of the Government to watch over the families and morals as the essential natural bases of all civil society. I hereby declare the following.

"1. The Chief of the town, upon receipt of a petition subscribed by a single woman under 25 years of age, requesting the custody of her person in order to contract marriage, shall proceed together with the commissioner of police and the chief who has agreed to marry her to her nuptials and to the presence of the father, or, in his absence, of the mother, shall ask her if she ratifies her petition.

"2. If, in the affirmative case, he shall place her under the custody of the person whom the petitioner may designate, and if they should not state any designation, the chief shall entrust her in the care of such resident as he may consider most suitable on account of his appearance and morality. During the time that she remains under the chief who has agreed to marry her may with the person under custody for short spaces of time, at reasonable hours, and cannot remain with her for any length of time. The man who has been agreed to marry her is obliged to support the woman under custody.

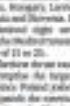
When the girl does not have the time to file a legal petition and lives outside or the chief of the town for help, she must placed in the custody of a third person and the parents were called to a meeting, when the couple were present, the commissioner of police, the notary and the parents explained to they they opposed the marriage. If the parents agreed to the marriage, the girl was returned to their custody on the condition that the would not be molested, and that they would not delay or postpone the marriage. If they didn't do as they promised, they had to pay the costs of the marriage.

Our modern, idealistic manners of the times should be resolved by legal means, but the Aguinaldo decree shows us a slice of life in those days that is not found in the history books. Perhaps we should look at our archives in search for more unwritten. Now that would make some fascinating reading.

Comment to: ambeth@hotmail.com

Nandy's latest crusade

AT LARGE



Rina Jimenez-David

"HOW OLD WERE YOU ON 2000?" ASKS NANDY Paderes of my daughter Mica over lunch at the newly opened Pontoc restaurant in Sweden. "Five."

"Three years old," she replies, and Nandy is richly taken aback. She is, after all, all of 20 years old now, a college student. And the realization that she was once that small, that young, that innocent gets increasing Nandy's advocacy has thrown us both for a loop.

"The trouble with Nandy is that he makes you pay for your lunch," blabbed their business chair Ramon Tuazon, who was also lunching at Pontoc. If I'm not mistaken. Well, I have been "paying" for our lunches ever since, even if Nandy always leaves the bill. There was never much I could do as a "kept" writer but write, and write, and write, because every morning invited some issue, some legislative measure he was pushing and was passionate about.

Over the years, we had built a pacing, casual relationship, one where meeting maybe once every month would be enough to catch up on what Nandy holistically holding forth on whatever issue it was that was occupying his time.

That's when makes Nandy one of my favorite people to interview. He's not only articulate, interesting, yet tempting age, has even a half-hearted attempt to state life in Canada with his wife Priscilla and children which he ultimately abandoned, could detract his passion. It's still believe that he is here to stay, and that he will not leave us, because of Nandy Paderes. It's because of people like him, who do not allow petty concerns to get in the way of their passionate commitment to the common good to stop living our purpose there.

IF THE crime we miss, Nandy was a true-blue opposition conscience from the Aquino administration. He could exercise far more leverage as a critic of the administration than as a member of the Senate. His stint as senator was a disaster. He would exercise far more than a decade and a will quite involved in—was pro-control. At the time, as spokesman of the Cardona faction, he was the only senator who could make the case would have made it illegitimate a law endeavor to carry a gun (unless he (or she) was in uniform and on official duty) and for ordinance to be among one of the many of Senators that a direct threat to the country's democratic institutions.

Speaking of the whole Cha-cha campaign, Nandy says it is not likely to succeed without an overhaul of the underlying system. "It's like someone changing clothes without bothering to take a bath first."

Nandy says a source of inspiration was the outreach of a Cagayan leader who explained that he had joined the group of "didn't want to face my grandchildren one day and have nothing to say when they ask me: 'Lolo, what did you do to make the country a better place?'"

Well, I should, actually. I have undertaken one day ask him this question, his wife and children might answer: "Your lolo did more and contribute to do more than his share."

The story of Romania marks a symbolic final break from a difficult past. Romania suffered one of Eastern Europe's most brutal communist dictatorships under Nicolae Ceausescu before its true overthrowing a bloody revolution in 1989.

Fireworks and cheers celebrated the entry of Romania and Bulgaria, the last of the Eastern countries that used to be behind the Soviet Iron Curtain to make a break from their communist past and join the democracies and market economies of the EU. They are now the EU's poorest members, with per capita wealth amounting to only a third of the EU average. They hope that EU membership will help clamp down their rising standards and launch their economies toward prosperity.

For Romania and Bulgaria, accession is only the beginning of the arduous climb toward attaining the basic standards set by the EU for its latest members, requiring them to broaden and democratize state administrations, fight corruption and organized crime, strengthen democratic institutions, to have relatively open market economies and to lift their economic output close to the level of other EU economies where they have to draw. Romania is the least developed member state with widespread poverty and an underdeveloped infrastructure.

The entry of the two Balkan countries comes as the EU is experiencing expansion fatigue following the enlargements in 2004. Further expansion has come to a pause because of fears that the EU might already be overstretched by its previous enlargement, and to the new members. The economies has heightened fears that unrestricted migration from poor members to the rest would flood the EU with much paid migrant workers competing for jobs, undermining its social standards. The unrestricted migration poses problems for Bulgarian migrant workers in Western Europe, competing for jobs with more skilled Eastern European labor and especially with Polish medical workers who are much in demand in Western Europe.

Comment to: amdarrach@freenet.com.au

Salvage victims dumped in upper-class village

LAST DEC. 21, 2006, THERE WAS AN ITEM in the Metro section of the Inquirer about "3 bodies found dumped near a Quezon City church." History does repeat itself. Since the 1990s, the open canals of Quiapo have been a favorite dumping ground for salvage victims.

I know because I live there.

So, this is not a blighted urban slum. It's normally tranquil the corner from the street named after the Quezon City mayor's departed wife, Betty Go Belmonte, and just a stone's throw away from Eduardo Cojuangco Jr.'s clubhouse. However, outside the tall walls and the barbed gates of the burgis, the passers-of darkness rule with impunity. Signs warning passersby to beware of snatchers are posted every few meters. Even the peaceful and restless of the many religious houses in this old genteel community are not spared.

Below are my household's encounters with criminality since we moved here in 1994.

1994—A visitor's car parked outside my gate stripped of its sound system in just 15 minutes.

1998—Another hit, motor stolen.

2001—A homeless beaten up by neighbors as he turned the corner into Betty Go Belmonte Street.

2002—Another motor stolen.

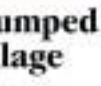
2003—My house broken into; a personal computer and other household effects stolen.

2004—Men in a car on Betty Go Belmonte Street point a gun at my children's friends as they walk to our house from E. Rodriguez Jr. Avenue just to scare them.

2004—Squatters on Bonifacio Drive corner Betty Go Belmonte Job simply fumble at my children's friends as they walk to Bahay Bata.

2005—A motor scooter stolen.

2005—Another hit, cable security street stolen. Through the years, I have complained, in writing and by phone, to the barangay and all the way up to the mayor's office. I ask that the guard



post fights [keywords: mayor, guard] being the most he kept. It is clear the criminals mind, or that street lights be added. I ask that sidewalks be planted over the canals, not merely to prevent them from being used as grave sites for the hungan misbegotten, but also to prevent drogue-carrying mosquitoes from breeding.

In August 2005, after another round of letter-writing, the city officer in charge for public order and safety, Manny Salvador, simply dismissed my complaints with a curt to-do. No explanation given. So one from the mayor's office ever had the courtesy to acknowledge my letters. Passing through the proverbial needle's eye is probably easier than getting to the mayor himself. His old home is just a few blocks away, but forget about being neighborly: I gave my letters to his staff there and, despite several follow-up calls, that was the last I heard of it.

My father, who served this government faithfully for over 50 years, left this old house to me. As evil exists, it should be close to prime, but not if the city government had changed the street classifications from residential to no man's land, where neither the restless souls of the ravaged victims of nightlife jetsetters nor the good-hearted pensionados and tenacious schoolchildren can walk in peace.

—KARL PETRUCELLI DE GUZMAN
Batangas Bastard, Quezon City

Living in the shadow of radio frequency radiation

IN DOÑA PETRONA SUBDIVISION, BARANGAY Bagong Tanay, Quezon City where I live, a cell site intent to being constructed among our homes. I would like to ask the city government, the Department of Transportation and Communications, the Department of Health, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and other government agencies concerned why cell site towers are being allowed to be built inside residential subdivisions.

There have been exciting some medical studies done on the effects of radio frequency radiation (RFR) that cell sites emit. Cell phones and cell sites that power their signals are relatively new inventions, and there is no way to tell what effects RFR from such installations will have on a person after 30 or 40 years of exposure.

The homeowners in our subdivision have launched a petition to stop the construction of the cell site, and we are determined to use every lawful means to block it. We appeal to concerned government agencies to help us in our campaign.

There are expectant mothers and many children in our subdivision. Once this cell site rises or is completed, these children will be living under its shadow and this radiation it emits for decades to come.

—ELSA E. DAPO
16 Elizabeth,
Doña Petronia Subd.,
Barangay Bagong Tanay, QC

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

When a cataclysmic event occurs

FEATURE

Jesus

"A good God does not tell suffering for His people." This is just not true. God willed suffering for His own by Son and there are times when our good God calls suffering for us. His people. Jesus was sent as the model for all humanity. God must certainly willed that Jesus suffer and die on the cross. Did God do this in his cruel and cold? Did He simply watch as His protection from on Lord? Clearly not. God willed the death of His Son in an act of sublime mercy and redemption, as part of a bigger plan. He allowed the Crucifixion in order to save us and to give us a perfect example of suffering for others, for a greater purpose.

Picking on the poor?

"Why do God pick on poor and innocent people?" First of all, God's idea of poor people differs radically from ours. Secondly, neither the Incarnate nor the Passion chipped anyone's wealthy or power people, both affected all of their path. Were they evil in the view Unknown regrets and as such deserving of tragedy? Did God order one or more of the region to burn because people there were more disobedient than those in Dublin? This is ridiculous. Jesus can find disobedience and rebellion in most places. He also finds greater holiness in those places. Jesus did not target innocent, poor people. He spoke to reach us all how to live by the almost nonsense in which our lives can be changed or ended.

"The God I know would not do such a thing." As there is only one God, your God is my God is Christ God. He's the same God. This is a fundamental truth of our Church and to dispute it is to be in error.

Love and tragedy

The difficulty here is the inability to reconcile our God of love to tragedy. This is understandable but naive, given all available evidence. The Old Testament is loaded with examples of God sending cancer sorrow to men. Has He changed?

This statement is reflective of the conflict between two opposites, the natural and the supernatural. Stretched, letting it all happen. The second is that God is actively involved in this period of history. To say that God would not allow the hurricane is silly. He just did. What God taking a break where the storm subsided in an empty and changed manner? Will God be any less involved in events in the future?

Some say it is just nature. Does God abandon the holes on one break but then abandon us to the violence of nature?

I think we have to accept that sometimes God willed these events or allowed them to endorsement. What is relevant is what we take from the experiences and how we allow these events to reshape or confirm our Christian commitment when necessary.

It must be noted that Jesus felt abandoned on the cross. I am quite sure that in their grief and suffering, many people affected by the last few disasters also felt abandoned.

Was Jesus actually abandoned on the cross? Of course not. Not by God and not by those of us who seek to serve Him now.

Did God abandon the people who were taken in those events or those who have been left suffering from those events? Again, not. God is with them, and with us and He will be with us in every moment of the journey.

God has made it clear that He gives everyone a chance to choose Him at the time of his death. It's a personal matter between Jesus, he will know Him for all eternity.

In Jesus' hands

I saw a small child knocked down by the tsunami in a film clip. I nearly doubled over with the pain of this scene and the reality of that innocent child being taken. I did not bring this to Jesus initially, but struggled, questioning God's mercy in such a reality.

Jesus, who knows us intimately, spoke. He said, "Anne, do you know this or all?"

I, with the eyes of my soul, gazed into the eyes of our beloved Jesus and saw what I always see when He allows this. His goodness, His compassion, His unquenchable love for us.

Jesus said, "Anne, consider your smallest child. You know how much I love her. If she were in your arms and you looked at Me standing here, and I put My arms out to take her, what would you do?"

I said without hesitation, "I would give her to You, of course."

Jesus said, "Of course. Compared to placing your daughter in My arms, even letting her walk out of the room would seem unacceptably perilous. Do you understand, Anne? Those children are safe with Me. I have them. Do not grieve for the souls I have called home to Me."

After this experience, I did not grieve for any of those taken. I trust of Jesus and His decisions in these matters.

Anne is a lay adult lay apostle of the New Jesus Christ, the Returning King (Revelation).

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Baguio shuts down parking operations

BAGUIO CITY—THE CITY GOVERNMENT HAS shut down the operations of a private parking firm, which has accused most of its officials of abuse before Malacañang.

The first administrative order issued by acting Mayor Bernardo Bautista Jr. this year directed employees to close the office of Judewell Parking Systems Corp. because it no longer has a business permit.

"We are not targeting any business entity by releasing Administrative Order 001-01," Bautista said.

"But since Judewell does not have any business permit anymore because the contract and the ordinance that allowed them to operate no longer exists, we were therefore constrained to shut them down," he said.

Members of the local police's Special Weapons and Tactics (Swat) team accompanied policemen to enforce Bautista's order. Police teams were sent to the firm's office because law enforcers anticipated resistance from Judewell president Rogelio Tan and his employees.

But Tan was not around. His employees accepted a copy of the administrative order and left the firm's office located inside a Burnham Park lot.

Tan had complained to Malacañang that Bautista and the council acted their way to illegally relieve they ignored a pending case before the Supreme Court, and terminated his 11-year contract to manage and operate six street parking lots.

A similar complaint Tan filed last year led to the suspension of Mayor Benito Ticbalen.

Ticbalen was unable to complete his remaining term in office because his First administrative order in 2000 discouraged motorists from paying parking fees imposed by Judewell.

But Bautista said no plan has been instituted regarding parking operations in the city or Judewell's 20 turnstiled parking meters that now belong to the government.

"We may as well lose parking from downtown streets like Session Road to regulate traffic flow, instead of making motorists pay," he said.

The city government will have to amend a traffic ordinance, which took effect when the council nullified the Judewell ordinance, he said. The 1994 traffic ordinance still requires motorists to pay parking fees.

"But I honestly do not know what to do about the parking meters which we can even steal," Bautista said.

The meters operate by dedicating credits from swipe cards that motorists are supposed to buy from Judewell. In multi-report, however, indicated that few motorists bought these cards. Judewell profits relied on parking attendants in the last five years, the report said.

Local officials said the city could re-install the meters and hire new traffic enforcers regular-ed parking.

"Each meter runs more than ₱100,000 and we cannot just throw them away. Maybe we can sell them," said an official.

Judewell apparently lobbied for Malacañang to interfere in the parking issue and succeeded.

Deputy Executive Secretary Manuel Gaite, of the Office of the President, sent city officials a Dec. 5 directive requiring them to explain their actions following a Nov. 13 complaint filed by Baguio and Nonoy Tan, Judewell's owners.

It did not appear that President Macapagal-Arroyo had been apprised about the issue when she hosted dinner for local officials on Dec. 26, media said.

"She did not raise it or her any way, nor of defendants, but [Ms Arroyo] kept reassuring us that she will support all our actions," he said.

It was not clear whether Gaite's directive had the knowledge of Ms Arroyo or if the approved it. Florent Cabreza, Jr. quoter Northern Luzon

ARMM losing ₱1B a year to illegal fishing

COTABATO CITY—THE RICH fishery resource of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is losing over a billion pesos yearly from illegal fishers operating with the protection of government officials.

Majendie Aruquisan, Regional Fishery Management Authority (RFMA) manager, said the yearly loss of more than a billion pesos was the estimate announced last year by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Manila.

This prompted ARMM Gov. Lisdey Ampatuan to issue Executive Order 16 on Nov. 14, creating an inter-agency regional monitoring control and surveillance system to ensure the proper collection of port, anchorage, wharfage fees, duties and other charges due to the government.

The EO, based on Section 24 of the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act (An Act Providing for an Separate and Fisheries Code of ARMM), aims to achieve food security through proper management and use of the region's natural resources and benefit fishers as one "exclusively to Filipinos, particularly ARMM residents."

Even prior to the creation of ARMM in 1989, local and foreign fishing vessels have been exploiting the Sulu and Celebes Seas here without any hindrance until Tausug, three of the six provinces comprising ARMM.

"These fishermen had deprived the government of revenue," said Damian Apolo, an order making RFMA official.

"It's about time we enforce the law and see to it that taxes, duties and other charges due to the government are collected," Apolo said.

Enforcing officials in government are the ones benefiting from ARMM's fishing industry and ethnic wealth—resource but not the regional government, he said.

Apolo cited the case of the recent telecommunications center, saying, ARMM has more than 1,000 communication towers put up, but the regional government gets nothing. Media gets it (revenues)."

"We have been deprived of our own resources in terms of revenue generation," said Apolo, whose capacities as port management manager for ARMM's Sulu Office in Jolong, Sheriff Kabunsuan as accreditation from the International Maritime Organization. Two other accredited ports are in Cebu and Iligan.

Guard residents of Tawi-Tawi and Sulu have reported sightings of foreign vessels believed to poaching off the provinces' waters.

"Almost daily—at ten two, three or more of the fishing boats in the bay area of Tawi-Tawi," complained Sibahilig Barangay Chair Mawap Sahiran of Langgayan town.

Ampatuan said this is where the task force, created by EO 16, should come in. Its members are from the Navy, the Coast Guard, the BIMP, the police, the Maritime Industry Authority, the National Telecommunications Commission, the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation and the Office of the Regional Governor.

Ampatuan said it was very unlikely for the regional ports authority, mandated to collect fees on all kinds of commercial and trading vessels within its territorial waters, to be accused of bootlegging for a half-a-million-peso mansion.

"That is ridiculous and (the incident) needs to be investigated," said Ampatuan.

Ampatuan said Malacañang should know the truth about the Philippine Navy's hasty linking of BIMP members of Tawi-Tawi to the alleged barnage taking of 33 fishermen and demanding ₱500,000 for their release early this week.

Navy personnel of Tawi-Tawi were performing their mandated task to impose charges on several fishing boats anchored in Bay where Navy gunboats arrived, he said.

Two Moro-based fishing boats, operated by the Jesus Fishing and Trading Inc., were among those held by ports authority for non-payment of dues.

"They are used to disarray because of the working hrs from noon, they're from doing this illegal activity," Ampatuan added. Charlie Atilano, Inquirer Mindanao

Talks taking shape between Negros execs, NDF leaders

THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT of Negros Occidental responded positively to overtures made by communist guerrillas in the province to talk peace, paving the way for what would be the first bilateral negotiations between government officials and guerrilla leaders.

Negros Occidental Gov. Joseph Marañon yesterday announced that he was creating a five-member panel to represent the province in exploratory talks with local leaders of the National Democratic Front.

Frank Fernandez, provincial-head of the NPA-Communist Party of the Philippines in Negros, earlier announced his willingness to dialogue with Marañon to explore avenues of "cooperation in the interest of the country."

Fernandez, in a recorded message Tuesday, said the dialogue would not constitute localized peace talks, as "it will just be a simple exchange of views."

Marañon said the five-man panel he was creating will report directly to him.

Communist panel

He also said he expected Fernandez to create his own panel to interact with talks, discuss specific issues and set ground rules in a few days.

"I will announce the members of the provincial government's panel simultaneously with Fernandez's announcement of his. If the agreement is reached," Marañon said.

Discussions on substantial issues will be made as soon as agreements are finalized and they shall be implemented immediately, he said.

He added that he hoped Christmas or very early in 2001 would be finished by the end of this month so that all programs and projects could be implemented immediately.

Marañon said he did not want to speculate on claims that Fernandez wants to meet with him to discuss peace matters.

The governor said his only interest in engaging the NDF in a dialogue is to discuss how they can work to accelerate development in the province.

Exciting 2007

In his statement Tuesday Fernandez said the guerrillas were ready to discuss with the governor their concerns against what he called were the "anti-people militarization" and the "fascist state-sanctioned Paramilitary Army, the Vigilante citizens" of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police and the operations of a drug syndicate allegedly by a Bacolod businessman.

Fernandez is ready to talk to any government officials or individual officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Philippine National Police," said Fernandez, "to explore possible areas of unity and cooperation in the interest of the common people."

Fernandez said that, with the CPP-NPA willingness to engage in a dialogue, "this will be an exciting 2007 and beyond."

"Remember we suggest what kind of projects he wants for the countryside. Guns must give way to progress. Bullets have to be silenced but peace is needed to succeed," the governor said. Carlos Conde, Inquirer Visayas

Belgium vows more aid for Mindanao peace

BAGUIO CITY—THE BELGIAN government said it would pour more funds in Mindanao to ensure a peace agreement between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is in place.

Belgian Ambassador to the Philippines Georges Vandaele told reporters during a recent visit here that only a final peace agreement would have a lasting effect on Mindanao.

He said that giving financial assistance to non-existent areas would help make the people think about development and make them economists themselves."

"We are supportive of both the MILF and the government since the MILF and officers meant to help implement the peace process," Vandaele said.

He said the pledge for more funds—under the Mindanao Trust Fund (MTF)—"would make them realize that they would be better off doing things than fighting."

The MTF was set up by countries—including Belgium—supportive of the peace agreement with the MILF.

The World Bank has so far committed $20 million to the MTF, Vandaele said.

Mohagher Iqbal, MILF chief peace negotiator, said the guerrillas were also looking forward to a final peace agreement with the government.

"This year it is make or break for the government and MILF," Iqbal said.

Jeffrey Ilpas and Cherlie Jarlene, Inquirer Mindanao

3 more victims in Bauang road crash die

BAGUIO CITY—THREE MORE passengers of the jeep that collided with a truck in Bauang, La Union, on Wednesday have died, bringing to 12 the fatalities in that accident.

Arnel Matico, 18, and Marilyn Aquinda, 19, all of Barangay Inclod in La Trinidad, Benguet, died while undergoing treatment at the Ilocos Training and Regional Medical Center (ITRMC) in San Fernando City on Wednesday night, Supt. Pedro Bhaldo, Bauang police chief, said.

Bhaldo said the third victim, Hazel Serrano, 18, died while she was being taken to Baguio City at 12 p.m. also on Wednesday. Serrano was not included in the initial fatality count because her death was immediately reported to the police.

Police said the 12 injured passengers of the jeep were transferred to the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center on Wednesday.

The victims' jeep smashed into a trailer truck at 4 a.m. while they were on their way home to Benguet after a beach party in a resort in Bauang.

Bhaldo, quoting the victims' parents, said the victims were traveling during the Christmas season to raise money for a retreat but before classes resumed.

"But they told their parents they were just going to nearby Ilocos town, not to Bauang, for a swimming party," he said.

Police have filed a case of reckless imprudence resulting in multiple homicide, multiple physical injuries and damage to property against the truck driver, Andres Placido Toot Placido Morales as earlier reported).

But the parents of the victims had been informed about the investigation report that suggested more children might have caused the accident, said La Trinidad Mayor Bruno Dangwas.

"They have accepted that their children may be at fault. They were drunk. There were bottles of beer and liquor inside the jeep," Dangwas said.

He said it was unlikely for the town government to prolong an investigation.

"Keeping [the survivors out of danger] is now my top priority but we need to raise funds. I already sought help from Undoy (Opisalenbrie Development Corp.) and other firms operating in Benguet," he said.

He said he asked the President Arroyo Management Staff for help "because we are looking for at least P300,000 to sustain the surgery and medicine these teenagers were require."

Dangwas, who chairs the Benguet Mayors' League, must also appeal from La Trinidad and neighboring Baliu town to fetch the victims in San Fernando City.

He also released P100,000 to cover the victims' hospital expenses in La Union.

Bhaldo said there were some raised about transporting the injured victims safely. "But the La Union hospital initially and authorized the transfer because it lacked the surgical and emergency facilities to treat them," he said. Cecilio Morales Jr. Fermin and Hector Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

EIGHTEEN-year old Hazel Antonio is carried into an ambulance shortly after the jeep that she and several others were riding slammed into a trailer truck in Bauang, La Union. Hazel died in a hospital hours after this picture was taken.

All systems go in Cebu, including anti-GMA ...

Front page 1

by Aurora was originally scheduled for Dec. 11-13 in Cebu, but the Philippine government, citing approaching Typhoon "Reming," abruptly rescheduled it even as foreign ministers had started to arrive.

The decision to delay the summit surprised many foreigners.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen suggested the threat might have been overhyped. The typhoon and terrorism, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said, called the typhoon explanation "extremely puzzling" and said the postponement had undermined the Philippines' credibility.

But the date was settled quickly and, despite initial uncertainty, the Philippines said all delegates had confirmed they would be returning to Cebu for the summit meetings of the 10 Asean countries, plus dialogue partners Japan, China, South Korea, India, South Korea and New Zealand.

IT WAS OFF, NOW IT'S ON: The postponed 12th Asean summit last December will push through on Jan. 13. Various Asean heads of state have confirmed their attendance.

Leaders confirm attendance

"Everything is set for the summit. All Asean have confirmed their participation," said Luis Gatmaitan, Asean Kalahan secretary for Asean affairs.

"Everybody is saying that they are better prepared now in terms of security, traffic and other aspects of the preparation with the extra month," said national spokesperson Ricardo Lercano. "All systems go."

Focus on human rights

Military spokesperson Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro said there were no specific terror threats, saddle-last month, when the United States, Britain, Australia and Japan issued travel advisories warning that al-Qaida-linked militants might have been in the final stages of planning attacks in the Philippines.

About 3,300 police officers and 3,000 troops will secure the meetings from potential terror attacks and street protests, police said. Rallies only will be allowed in designated park, far from the Asean meetings.

Troops said hundreds of activists from Manila will join colleagues in Cebu in protests that will highlight human rights violations, trade liberalization and its effect on poor countries, US military intervention and the war on terror.

They also plan to denounce the government for handling a US Marine convicted of raping a Filipino woman in the US Embassy—a move Ms Arroyo's administration said was necessary to maintain US-Philippine military cooperation.

International human rights groups, including London-based Amnesty International, have expressed concern over the rising number of political killings in the Philippines, where hundreds of left-wing activists have been killed in recent years with only a handful of cases being solved.

Key resolutions

Among key resolutions to be adopted at the Cebu summit is a legally binding Convention on Counterterrorism. Other resolutions will focus on economic integration and efforts to draft an Asean charter, in addition to a series of bilateral issues, Lercano said.

A draft of the accord calls on the nations to improve cross-border cooperation to prevent attacks, share intelligence and training, curb terror financing and rehabilitate convicted terrorists to prevent repeat attacks.

Eight possible additions from a socalled Eminent Persons Group, led by former President Fidel V. Ramos, will submit recommendations to Asean leaders for the tradi-tional changes in a long-overdue charter they are planning to adopt.

Ramos said earlier that dialogue include an easing of a fundamental Asean policy—which forbids member countries from interfering in each other's domestic affairs—to allow intervention when members fail to comply with the group's edicts.

Also yesterday, the Department of Public Works and Highways announced that national roads damaged by flooding had been repaired.

DPWH Central Visayas Director Robert Lukwalt workers were now repainting fences to brighten up Cebu's cities and helping squatters of major roads to a beautification project to spruce up areas in convention sites. With reports from Cecile D. Solsoreta, AP

No gov't work, classes on Jan. 12, 15 in 3 Cebu cities

THERE WILL BE NO GOVernment work or classes on Jan. 12 (Friday) and 15 (Monday) in the cities of Cebu, Mandaue and Lapu-Lapu, which will host the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit.

The Palace has declared the two days as special nonworking days in those cities, according to a presidential proclamation issued yesterday so the people there will be "given full opportunity to participate in the important event."

The proclamation covers government employees, except those required to render emergency, security and other related services to the public and private schools.

Private companies are not covered by the proclamation, Christine O. Servañez-

Labor leaders urge Senate to OK ₱125 pay hike

Front page 1

was ₱1,895, five times the minimum wage of ₱380 in the region.

The living wage is the amount of income needed to provide for the requirements of a family of six to enable it to maintain a decent standard of living.

The living wage refers to the total income of the employed members of the family, according to the NWPC.

Family wage

In contrast, Rep. Arlo Paul B. defined "family wage" in his resolution as income worth ₱1,000 (in Emerson) as "a single salary given to the head of the family for his work, sufficient for the needs of the family without the other spouse having to take up essential employment outside the home."

Many said APL believed that the House leadership approved the measure so the Senate would take the blame if it failed to act on the measure, a view shared by Manny Lalong of the militant Kilusang Mayo Uno.

"To solve anday, the Senate, pass the version of the House. It's not that perfect. In view of the 13th time left for the 13th Congress, it would be good if you have to approve the version. Let's not split hairs on the amount. Let's not debate the contents. Just pass it," Nieto said.

"Yes, if I can make a suggestion, call their bluff and everybody will be happy," he said.

Senate version

Opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, chair of the investigating committee, said he was inclined to approve a legislated wage hike, but he questioned the Senate version, which provides a lower, but more reasonable ₱100 wage increase.

ANGRY FACE OF LABOR: Militant groups rally in front of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines office in Makati in support of the passage of the P125-across-the-board wage hike.

"If I will not act on this bill, they will put the blame again on the Senate. I'd rather put the blame on Sen. Arroyo," he told reporters after the hearing, referring to the President.

Estrada said he was more inclined to adopt Senate Bill No. 2009, which he authored and which provides a ₱300 daily across-the-board wage hike in one go but would restrict it to firms with at least 99 employees.

He said he would not be inclined to support any other measure that would be implemented over a longer period, like the one in Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile's version.

Sen. Edgardo Angara expected the Senate version to face tough opposition from some of his colleagues in the Senate, including Sens. Franklin Drilon, a former labor secretary. "It will face tough sailing here," he said.

DOLE against legislated hike

Even if the wage measure gets ratified by both chambers of Congress, labor groups expected President Macapagal-Arroyo to veto it because the government has opposed any legislated hike, saying the higher than in the rest of the country) ... Let's look at the regional differences in cost of living and the capacity of employers to pay," Lagman said.

Labor said he lamented that the Department of Labor and Employment appeared to be siding the jobs of the employers, instead of mediating between employers and workers.

Formal sector

Joseyo Ortiz Luis Jr., president of the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines (Employ), the largest, argued that the legislated wage increase, which covers the formal sector, would be the president of a company would only benefit the 3.3 million people working in the "formal sector."

"Ang problema dun still we have to the 5.7 million people, sa sunday that it will be implemented, still cost about ₱410 billion a year, and this is not based on projections and will be passed on to the consumers," he said.

By the end of the working population, he meant those self-employed such as vendors, farmers and fishfolk/pesos.

"And we assume there'll be job losses because of this. Many companies who can't afford this will probably have to retrench or close shop, but those who can will probably be going underground," Ortiz-Luis said.

Ambassador Donald Dee, president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry pointed out that legislated wage hikes are not the single biggest solution to an inefficient economy.

"By merely increasing the wages, you're not solving the problem, if your objective is to improve quality of life. May I suggest to the senators to look at it going to the various regions if the money is that you can drive nine what exactly are the reason for the inefficient economy and you will find that one cause is obviously energy cost and then infrastructure," he said.

Donaldson: "Mr employers can't

SUMMARY OF CURRENT REGIONAL DAILY MINIMUM WAGE RATES

Non-Agriculture, Agriculture in (Plantation Non-Plantation)

REGION	NON-AGRICULTURE	AGRICULTURE	
		Plantation	Non-Plantation
NCR	350.00		
CAR	229.00-258.00	214.00-229.00	214.00-229.00
I	180.00-206.00	166.00	170.00
II	210.00-241.00	196.00-206.00	198.00-206.00
III	251.00-283.00	241.00-248.00	198.00-248.00
IV-A	251.00-283.00	241.00-248.00	198.00-248.00
IV-B	209.00-220.00	183.00-192.00	192.00-197.00
V	191.00-220.00	168.00-186.00	168.00-176.00
VI	186.00-212.00	183.00-203.00	183.00
VII	250.00-267.00	198.00-205.00	198.00-205.00
VIII	220.00	205.00	205.00
IX	210.00	193.00	197.00
X	238.00-259.00	202.00-222.00	202.00-222.00
XI	250.00-270.00	208.00-218.00	208.00-218.00
XII	224.00	208.00	208.00
CAR	224.00	204.00	204.00
ARMM	208.00	200.00	200.00

sation, he meant those self-employed such as vendors, farmers and fishfolk/pesos.

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Donaldson: "Mr employers can't be asked to carry the entire burden of the inefficiency of the economy."

Many said he agreed with the business leaders' argument that increasing wages was not the only solution to the country's labor problems.

Eliminate subcontracting

"What's needed is a holistic and structural approach," he said, even as he proposed that the employers allow the workers to form unions, and for the labor department to abolish the regional wage boards in favor of industry wage boards to address concerns about different levels of minimum wages, and to eliminate the policy of contracting and subcontracting.

"That's the solution," he said.

Lalong said unlike trade and industry secretaries, labor secretaries were creating unemployment.

In the House of Representatives, a militant lawmaker called the labor secretary a "fool" for issuing a warning that the House-approved measure would be "disastrous for labor and employment."

Makabayan party-list Rep. Rafael Mariano said the Arroyo administration's policy of trade liberalization and monopolies were the ones putting small entrepreneurs out of business.

In Cauayan City, a businesswoman said telecenters/cafés would take place, particularly among SMEs if the wage hike was implemented.

"The timing is bad because business is not so good," said Jacinta Bautz president of the Mini-Chamber of Commerce and Industry. With reports from Jerome Aning and Michael Lim Ubac in Manila and Charlie C. Mahilum and Fidy Quiros, Inquirer Mindanao

Lea stages Broadway comeback in 'Les Miz'

Front page 1

Claude-Michel Schönberg and lyricist Herbert Kretzmer have given the character a show-stopping solo song number, "I Dreamed a Dream."

Lea, who is acknowledged as the top Asian actress to portray French pauline Epoxine in the Broadway run of "Les Misérables" in 1993, is again the first Asian actress to essay the role of Broadway.

Lea's co-star Jose Almeida played Fantine in the national tour of "Les Miz" in the US and European Angel on West End on the United Kingdom. But I may be the first Filipino to play Fantine on Broadway," Lea told the Inquirer yesterday via e-mail and text messages.

Epoxine at 22

"When my agent [Jim Wilson] first emailed me about the role, I thought, 'Whoa!' It was not a role that I was exactly expecting. But after I was offered the part, I realized: Hey, maybe it's something that I could do. It's a beautiful and wonderful part," she said.

Lea admitted that she never envisioned herself playing Fantine, because when I first did the show [as ingénue Epoxine], I was only 22."

As a curtain-raiser, herself, she is more than ripe for challenging mother roles like Fantine. Lea, who will turn 36 on Feb. 22, gave birth to fourteen Nicole Beverly on May 16.

"I'll join the show on March 6," she said.

Rehearsals

According to the US websites, Lea will be replacing Broadway actress Daphne Rubin-Vega. Of "Rent" fame) who will be leaving the show on Feb. 18 to join Oscar winner Philip Seymour Hoffman in the play "Jack Goes Boating."

While Lea is rehearsing for "Les Miz," ensemble member Mike de Sousa Dudek will take over the role of Fantine from Feb. 20 to March 4.

Mackintosh's representatives made the formal announcement on Jan. 2. They then added her to play the part when the star eight months pregnant," Lipsyn Rubin-ga, Lea's mom, told the Inquirer, in a separate phone interview.

Salonga said she would be accompanying Lea and granddaughter Nicole to the United States.

"Her husband (Robert Chien) will join us for two weeks to help us set up, then he'll have to go back to work. That's why I want to be there with her. She will not curtail on her own," Salonga said by telephone.

"She needs all the help she can get! Carrying how pandemonium she is about her job, she'd give her all to this production. She even told me: 'I don't care if they don't pay me. I'll still do this play!'" she added.

8-month contract

Salonga added that their apartment in New York was just "walking distance from the theater, so Lea will not be that far. Classed. She's contracted to do the play for eight months."

Lea was not a bit worried when the buzzers caught up with her yesterday at the mall. She was on her way to Serena spa appointment.

"I am just living my life and enjoying Manila as much as I can before leaving for New York. I know that I need to start preparing for it in a major way when I get to the US," Lea said.

Lea is scheduled to leave for New York on her birthday, Feb. 22.

"I reminder myself everyone that I have my mom and my husband with me. I am also trying to get out mainly to acclimatize so I can learn to do my best. This is something new for me. This is my first time to perform on Broadway [with a chick]... but I'm just hoping for the best. That's all I can do at this point," she said.

Extended run

According to Broadway-World.com and Playbill.com, the new production of "Les Miz" will run at The Broadhurst Theater (235 West 44th Street) in New York "pick and "was extended until at least the summer of 2007 ... due to strong box-office and outbound-audiences."

The websites added that Lea was reported "to step in the production through the entire period."

"Les Miz" has been running for the past 21 years, according to its official website. The musical premiered at the Barbican Theater in London on Oct. 8, 1985. The US premiere opened on March 2, 1987, at the Broadway Theater in New York.

Life after Ms Saigon

The US websites reported that Lea's co-star was Jerry Cameron Mackintosh productions.

After topping a worldwide search, Lea made her West End debut in 1989 as Kim, the heroine of "Miss Saigon," for which she won an Olivier Best Actress award.

Two years later, she repeated the same role in the Broadway run of "Miss Saigon," winning a Tony as well as Drama Desk and Outer Critics' Circle trophies.

Lea was also nominated for three more actress to play Epoxine in "Les Misérables" on Broadway. She went on to play the same part in the West End and Australia productions of "Les Miz."

She also tackled the same role in the 10th anniversary concert of "Les Miz" held at the Royal Albert Hall in London.

4 years ago

The last time Lea appeared on Broadway was in a revival of Rogers and Hammerstein's "Flower Drum Song" in 2003.

In 2005, she made her grand debut at Carnegie Hall in a "sold-out concert."

Lea has provided her singing voice to Disney animated features "Aladdin" and "Mulan." She also appeared on US TV shows "ER" and "In the World Series" and the TV movie "Redwood Curtain."

In 2004, she lent her voice to Disney Microsoft's animated film "My Neighbor Totoro," winning the role of mother to a character voiced by Hollywood child star Sakura Fanning.

Lea earlier told the Inquirer that she was "very grateful" for positive roles. "My being a busy bee, in fact, indeed my work is deeper significance. You just attack roles and songs in a different way."

More endangered fish found on Chinese boat

Coming page A1

were arrested on Dec. 21 at the Tubbataha Reefs National Park.

Napoleon wrasse, or maraong, is an expensive reef fish catered to restaurants in Hong Kong and major cities in China.

The suspected poachers have been charged with violations of the country's fisheries and environmental laws, the Tubbataha Management Office (TMO) said yesterday.

The Chinese were subjected to inquest proceedings on New Year's Eve.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) **counted the inventory of the live fish in the** water tanks of the fishing boat Hai Hsin on Jan. 2, **according to the TMO. The fish included more** than 300 Napoleon wrasse and an assortment of **groupers, the TMO said in a dispatch.**

Angelique Songco, manager of the TMO, **said she was surprised by the BFAR's finding** that there were more fish in the basins at the **bottom of the fishing boat**.

"The estimate of our TMO personnel was actually very far from the actual number of Napoleon wrasse inside the 'boat,'" Songco said in a mobile phone interview.

Songco said the TMO initially estimated that there were 500 fish maraong, 800 Lapu-lapu (grouper) and 500 red snapper on the Hai Hsin when the TMO intercepted it last month inside the marine park.

She said BFAR inspectors discovered that there were 13 water tanks on the boat.

More than 1,800

As of late Tuesday, Songco said BFAR inspectors had already counted 333 live Napoleon wrasse and 333 Lapu-lapu in three **water tanks.**

She said counting the fish lasted the entire day.

"Imagine if there are more than 600 fish in the three water tanks. Then 10 cuts to say that there are 200 fishes in each tank. If there are 15 tanks, then there could be more than 2,000 live fish inside the tanks," Songco said.

She said it could take a while before the BFAR could release the endangered fish species back to the sea.

In a separate interview, Malcolm Sarmiento, BFAR director, said he had ordered his staff **to finish the inventory yesterday.**

He said he was not surprised by the large **number of live fish found on the boat.**

Release needs court order

Sarmiento, however, said that his staff would not release the fish once they finished the inventory unless they got a court order.

"We cannot release the fish if we do not have a court order. We will be vulnerable to contempt," he said.

Sarmiento said the fish would be used as evidence against the Chinese fishermen.

Once the BFAR gets hold of a court order, it **will immediately find an appropriate area** where the fish can be released, according to **the BFAR director.**

He said the release would be witnessed by **representatives of environment groups and** the court.

Good aeration

The possibility of the fish dying on the boat was remote because the water tanks had good aeration channels, according to the official.

Songco said the Chinese were charged with violation of the Philippine Fisheries Code (for possession, poaching, taking of rare, threatened and endangered species and exportation of the fish.

They were also charged with violation of the National Integrated Protected Areas System and the Philippine Wildlife Resources Conservation Act.

"Inquest proceedings were conducted by Prosecutor Bogidor Fadol aboard the Hai Hsin on Dec. 31, 2006, and a commitment order for the detention of the Chinese nationals in the Palawan Provincial Jail was signed by Judge Rebecca Ito on Jan. 1, 2007," Songco said.

Six released on bail

She said that on the same day six of the Chinese fishermen were released on bail and "are now on board the Hai Hsin."

Another case for the violation of Provincial Ordinance No. 819 banning the use of compressors was filed against all the Chinese with the **Municipal Circuit Trial Court of Busuanga, Palawan.**

Sarmiento said his office was not buying the excuse of the Chinese fishermen that they had bought the Napoleon wrasse and that the **fish had come from a breeding farm.**

No farm for maraong

"There are no breeding farms for this fish species in the Philippines. Nobody can breed it here because we still do not have the technology to do it," he said.

The Convention for the International Trade of Endangered Species prohibits the possession of Napoleon wrasse even if it's for breeding purposes, according to the BFAR official.

The Chinese, apparently caught the maraong within the Sulu Sea or within the Tubbataha Reefs.

Sarmiento said the fishing gear found on **the Hai Hsin clearly indicated that its crew** was engaged in fishing.

"Also, the sheer number of wrasse specimens arrested only proved that they were on a fish**ing trip," he said.**

THIS IS THE CHINESE SHIP Hai Hsin on which 28 suspected poachers were arrested and will be charged with violation of the country's fisheries and environmental laws.

Republic of the Philippines
City of Manila
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

NOTICE

ALL MANILA REAL PROPERTY TAXPAYERS

Owners or administrators of real properties in Manila are hereby notified that payment of real property taxes for the First Quarter, CY 2007 without penalty, is **on or before March 31, 2007**.

The next quarterly installments are as follows:

2nd Quarter	-	On or before June 30, 2007
3rd Quarter	-	On or before September 30, 2007
4th Quarter	-	On or before December 31, 2007

Be it known also that prompt quarterly payments entitles taxpayers to a **15% discount** for the first month of the quarter, and **10% discount** for the second and third months of the quarter. On the other hand, a **20% discount** will be granted if real property taxes for CY 2007 are paid in full on or before January 31, 2007.

For your added convenience, the Manila Taxpayer's Lounge will also be open to the public on the following dates:

Saturday,	**January 06, 2007** 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Sunday,	**January 07, 2007** 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday,	**January 13, 2007** 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Sunday,	**January 14, 2007** 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday,	**January 20, 2007** 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Sunday,	**January 21, 2007** 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday,	**January 27, 2007** 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Kindly pay your taxes EARLY to avail of the discounts and to avoid the penalties. Thank you for your continued support! Mabuhay!

Manila, January 05, 2007.

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Dr. Felipe Medalla, former Director General, NEDA
Mr. Romeo L. Bernardo, former Undersecretary of Finance
Mr. Reynaldo P. Valencuela, former economist, IBRD

The regular rate per person is P5,000.00
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The group rate (3 persons or more who register on or before January 5, 2007) is P4,000.00

For further information, please call seminar director Pascual Lakdawala Jr.,
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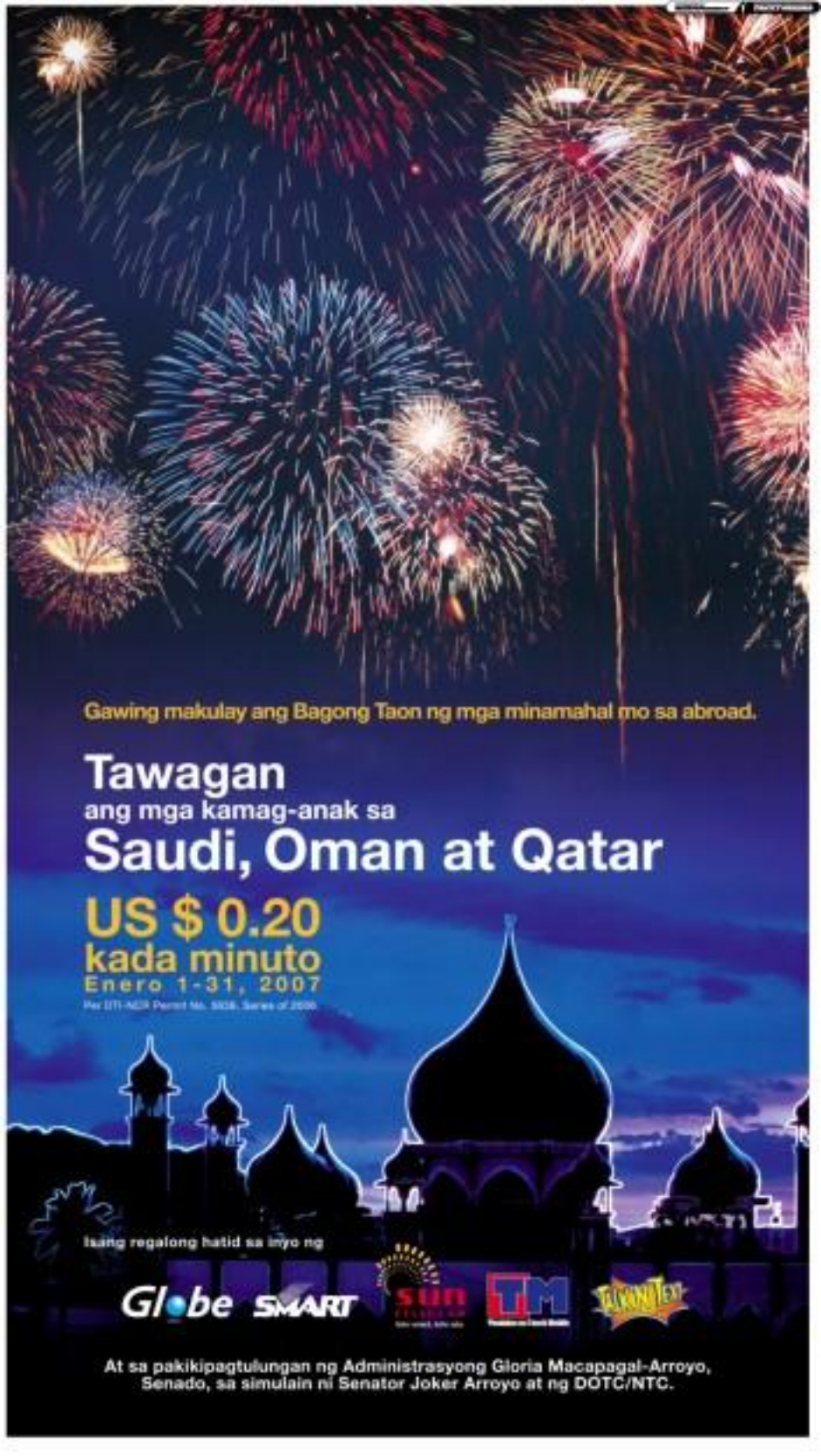
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Senado, sa simulain ni Senator Joker Arroyo at ng DOTC/NTC.

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PGH to increase rates next month

OR fee union's prime concern

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE PHILIPPINE GENERAL HOSPITAL, THE "teaching hospital" of the University of the Philippines system, is set to increase rates this year, raising concern from its own employees.

The PGH employees union said the planned increases, particularly those involving operating rooms and patient identification cards, could be too much for cluster patients.

Union president Arnel Theware said a December announcement hiked the price of the "blue card," a patient's identification card, would rise from P7 to P15. Patients would also pay P1,500 in operating room (OR) fee, through the Philippine Health Insurance Corp., the government health insurance program, said Theware, a nurse who is secretary general of the Alliance of Health Workers. He said the rate adjustment was scheduled to take effect next month.

Theware said the union was concerned primarily about the new fee for the operating room. Dr. Michael Tee, PGH spokesperson, said yesterday the adjustments were carefully studied by the hospital's cases committee that included union members. The committee meets Jan. 9 to discuss the various concerns. "At the PGH, everything is democratic," he added. Herware said even if the new OR fee were to be paid by Philhealth, some charity patients may not be covered by it. This means they will have to pay the P1,500, "an amount beyond for indigent patients," he said.

FEES for the previous "blue cards" issued by the government-owned Philippine General Hospital to indigent patients are also expected to be raised under the institution's proposed rate adjustment scheme. —ALVIN KASIG

Landowners told: Beware of smoothies

By Margaux C. Ortiz

VICTIMS OF THE SCAM FADING like that a "special" type of garnish enzymes purportedly used by Belgrado would cost them a lot of money.

An official of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) yesterday warned the public against a gang notorious for duping landowners of millions of pesos through an elaborate scheme.

NBI National Capital Region (NCR) Director Ruel Lasala said the group, which he called Pamantayan (or Taxpayer) Gang, had been targeting landowners and businessmen in Metro Manila and other provinces in the country.

"The suspects usually choose affluent or upper middle-class victims selling their property," Lasala told the Inquirer.

The existing cases after a businessman, who requested anonymity, sought the NBI's assistance yesterday after he lost close to P500,000 to the gang.

The businessman was selling 11 hectares of land in the outskirts of Metro Manila when members of the group approached him last month, Lasala said. The gang was always accompanied by a foreign-looking individual who posed as a Japanese or Indian businessman, or an Arabian sheikh.

After gaining their trust, the group would inspect their victims' title making profits out of the sale of "special" garnish enzymes. The group and their accomplices would later disappear when the victim contacts them for fewer deals, Lasala said.

Homeowners along railway moving soon

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THOUSANDS OF RAILWAY dwellers in Muntinlupa City may be able to move to better homes this year, if excavation work in the sprawling New Bilibid Prisons pushes through once work

Four contractors are set to begin work in 50 hectares of the 114.6 hectares "disposable" land in the compound next week.

This was announced by the Urban Poor Affairs Office (UPAO) yesterday after a meeting with officials of the National Housing Authority and Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council.

The "site development," including excavation and drilling for footings, paving of roads, installation of power lines and water pipelines, is expected to be completed in July.

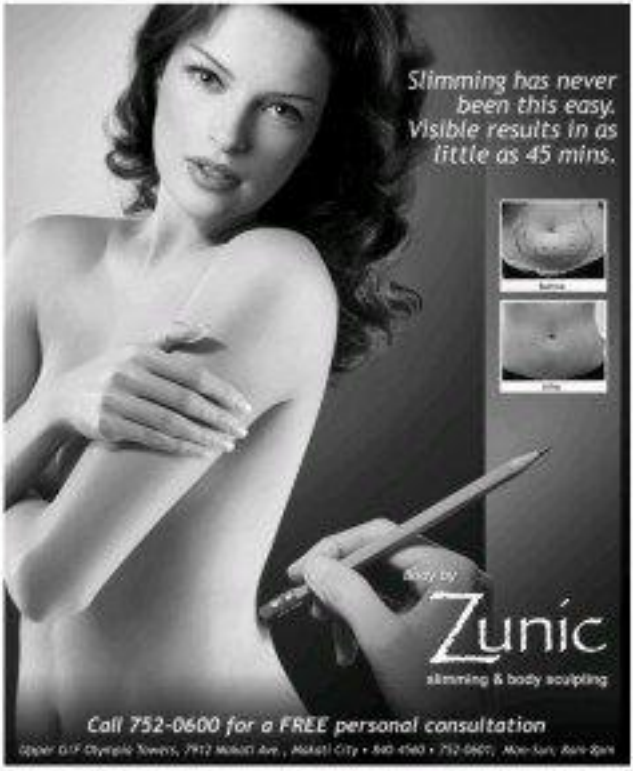
The construction of low-cost houses for the 8,000 families displaced by the South Rail project would immediately follow, said UPAO head Noel Cardenas.

The three- and four-story buildings will consist of 32-square units costing P100,000 to P200,000 each, officials added.

Cardenas said the local government was trying to get into partnerships with nongovernment groups like Gawad Kalinga and Habitat for Humanity to hasten the cost of construction.

The houses, he added, would occupy less than 19 percent of the 50 hectares as some parts of the land were unsuitable for housing.

The local government has also allocated a small portion of the land for recreational facilities and business establishments.



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Reward to be shared by informants in Ballocillo case

MetroBriefs

Cops keep busy for Quiapo festivity next week

THE MANILA Police District (MPD) has conducted saturation drives within the Quiapo district to net the usual criminal elements in preparation for the Black Nazarene's 400th year anniversary celebration next week. According to MPD acting director Chief Supt. Danilo Maronna, the saturation operations would lessen or eliminate possible crimes that may happen in Quiapo on the day of procession. The activities covered by the operation include Pasalubong, Cinquenta, Traslacion and Quiapo de Bro. Maronna said the image of the Black Nazarene would be in Quiapo church on the day of procession. The procession, participated by a crowd that is estimated to reach 200,000, would then pass through Quiapo's smaller streets. The MPD will also set an advance command post at the Quirino Grandstand and Plaza Miranda. Maronna added, "We will deploy 200 police and personnel, 100 traffic enforcers and 100 civilian traffic aliases on the day of the feast." The MPD chief said the bomb-sniffing dogs, four Special Weapons and Tactics teams, two groups of paramedics from the fire department, two fire trucks as well as ambulance vehicles and 50 plainclothes policemen would be assigned in different venues. "There will also be at least five public announcement centers in Quiapo's streets," Aime Ilano added.

Margaret J. Ortiz and Lara Bolano

Caloocan 'blooms' with posters galore

HOPING to get ahead of their counterparts, posters, banners and streamers disguised as "support" of various advocacies and greetings during the holidays have saturated in the major streets of Caloocan City, days before the election period officially begins on Jan. 15. And gauging from the number of different names printed on the campaign materials, the number of candidates vying for positions of mayor, congressman, councilor or vice-president's elections in the city has the potential to reach 100 or more.

The most prominent of all are the posters belonging to RJ Echiverri, a member of the city council, urging residents to "Go out, register and vote." The posters are plastered on walls and roads all the way from the Caloocan City College along Samson Road. The incumbent mayor's brother's statement is somewhat too much to be classified. Commissioner on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos, however, said recently he did not consider the posters, banners, and posters in public as election as they are of wholesome appeal. Before, he said that only after the person shown in Tarpaulins for his certificate of candidacy is election materials are classified as "election-related."

Mary C. Canuga

By Jocelyn R. Uy

INFORMANTS, POLICE AND DIVERS' quotes were who helped to the arrest of the alleged killer of a lawyer working for the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) and his son will get P200,000, or 16 percent of the P1.2 million reward money.

The was announced yesterday by the Southern Police District. Information would get the money on Monday after the initial P200,000 bounty with of reason of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Paranaque and Muntinlupa police, said SPD director Chief Supt. Rolando Bonoan in a phone interview.

The informants helped police track down the alleged gunman of Nestor Ballocillo and his son Benedict.

Bonoan said his friends from various organizations, whom he called the "Friends of SPD," and SCIDG Director Reynaldo Varilla raised P50,000 each. Mayor Florencio Bermudez pledged another P100,000.

The OSG has yet to release the P1 million reward it promised. A police official, who requested anonymity, said the agency would only give the amount when the mastermind in the killing of the Ballocillos was arrested.

But Bonoan denied this, saying the money would be released as soon as funds were available. He vowed that the police would continue its hunt for the mastermind of the twin murders.

Follow up operations

Meanwhile, Muntinlupa police chief Supt. Ronnel Estilles told the reporters yesterday they would use the reward money to fund follow up operations on the case.

Investigators arrested last week Christopher Estevio, alias Benjamin Bermudez, 27, the alleged gunman after informants told them they considered Garcia bragging during a drinking session that he shot the Ballocillos.

Muntinlupa police chief Supt. Mario Reyes earlier said Estevio was facing a string of murder and robbery cases in Manila. The suspect was arrested at the Philippine General Hospital where he was being treated for gunshot wounds he sustained in a robbery in Pasalubong district.

Right track

"I am positive that we are on the right track," Bonoan said. He expressed confidence that Garcia would lead them to the other suspects in the killing as police had corroborated their investigation, he added.

Docs face charges in baby's death

By DJ Yap

THE MOTHER OF A BABY GIRL who died while undergoing surgery at the Philippine Heart Center in Quezon City has charged her daughter's doctors with negligence.

Arlita Aquino, of Bacoor, Cavite, filed a criminal complaint Wednesday against doctors Riley Lemos, Jaime Suarez and Ruben Nuevo in the Quezon City prosecutor's office.

In her affidavit, Aquino accused the doctors of reckless imprudence that allegedly led to complications and the eventual death of her 3-year-old daughter Samantha Louise.

The baby girl, suffering from a congenital heart disease, was admitted to the Heart Center on April 25 after three days of fever, cough and colds.

On April 26, the cardiovascular surgery but died during the operation.

Bruises

The thoracic surgeon said she found black and blue bruises on the girl's body, particularly in the pelvic area, after the failed procedure.

The cause of death listed in the death certificate was found as complete failure as a consequence of her congenital heart defect.

Unconvinced, Aquino sought the help of the National Bureau of Investigation, which later conducted an autopsy on the girl's body, she said.

Bleeding

According to the medico-legal report of Dr. Rodante Rey San Diego, bleeding was one of the "major and most serious complications" of the procedure performed on Samantha Louise.

"The operation on the instant case should have foreseen the possibilities of the occurrence of this complication," San Diego wrote in his conclusion.

"Failure to do so would be a violation of the doctrine of foreseability, which is applied in malpractice cases," he continued.

San Diego added that the patient's death would have been averted "if only there was meticulous preparation on the patient on the possible development of the complications."

Complications

"Thus, the development of complications cannot be totally prevented but lessening the effect of such complications ... would definitely manage the impact on the patient," he said.

The lawyers tried to reach Lemos and the Nuevo through several phone calls to their clinic at the Heart Center but the calls were not immediately returned.

GLOW DAY
A fruit vendor in Binondo raises a much-deserved cup after a hectic holiday season.
MARK CRISTINO

Police nab colleague for mauling, shooting pedestrian in Cainta

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

INSTEAD OF ARRESTING GERRIBALE, PO2 Jose Ballesa Jr. ended up being apprehended by his own colleagues after he allegedly stabbed and shot to the leg a man in Cainta, Rizal last week.

Cainta police chief Supt. Joel Garcia told the Inquirer Ballesa was arrested on Wednesday morning while he was walking on Ortigas Avenue Extension.

The policeman was caught after the shooting incident involving Jonathan Gumba, 18, on Dec. 27, 2006.

The alleged reason: The suspect and the victim accidentally bumped into each other while they were walking on Bonifacio Avenue in Barangay Sto. Domingo.

Ballesa allegedly walked away after the incident.

But since he was wearing a police jacket and because barkers and night club workers in the area know him, policemen caught up with him after seven days.

Garcia said Ballesa had told him he just decided himself from the complainant.

"[Ballesa] said the (Gumba) tried to grab his service firearm so he (our defendant) himself from the attack," Garcia said, quoting the suspect, who was assigned at the Jala Jala police station, also in Rizal province.

The complainant had alleged that the suspect was drunk during the incident.

Columnist to face three libel cases in Cebu

By Jaime B. Rodambini
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE CITY PROSECUTOR OF Cebu has found probable cause to indict Philippine Daily Inquirer columnist Ramon Tulfo for three counts of libel before the Cebu Regional Trial Court.

City Prosecutor Nicholas Sollot said yesterday he approved the resolution of investigating prosecutor Ma. Lourdes Lahoz, dated Dec. 19, that found Tulfo liable for the libel cases filed by former Cebu customs district collector Lourdes Mangasong.

Sollot said he recommended a P10,000 bail bond for each count of libel.

Mangasong filed the cases against Tulfo last year because of a series of articles about the former customs official in his column "On Target" in the Inquirer.

She asked for P10 million in damages.

Sollot said the prosecutor's office would have to wait 10 days from the time Tulfo received the resolution before filing the cases in court to give the columnist a chance to file a motion for reconsideration or a petition for review with the Department of Justice.

The charges would be suspended if Tulfo questioned the prosecutor's resolution and his motion would be acted on first, the prosecutor said.

In her libel charge, Mangasong said Tulfo maligned her by insinuating she had an "amorous relationship" with Finance Secretary Margarito Teves.

Tulfo, in his columns dated March 23, March 30 and April 6, 2006, allegedly also questioned Mangasong's competence as district collector and asked why her transfer to the Port of Iloilo was aborted.

The columnist allegedly also insinuated that Mangasong had a backer "that owns a presidential order can be violated," Lahoz noted in his resolution.

In his counter-affidavit, Tulfo admitted he wrote all the statements in his column, according to Lahoz.

The prosecutor said Tulfo, in his defense, said Mangasong was a public servant and his columns were indeed with public interest.

In his six-page resolution, Lahoz, however, gave more to Mangasong's complaint that Tulfo's columns contained libelous and malicious imputations against her.

Sollot said Tulfo's defense of privilege communication was a matter for the court to decide and rule on.

"It's the court that will ultimately determine if the article was indeed privileged or not. Our office is tasked to determine if there was probable cause," Lahoz said.

The prosecutor also gave weight to Mangasong's allegations that Tulfo attempted to extort money from her. Through his close associates called her twice in March to schedule a meeting with the columnist supposedly to help her project a good image.

When she turned down the offer, Mangasong claimed Tulfo attacked her on March 27 and in subsequent columns on March 30 and April 6 (see above).

Lahoz, in his resolution, found Tulfo's columns to be "laced with malice" and not intended to uphold the public's interest because the columnist allegedly never refuted Mangasong's allegations that he was attempting to extort money from her.

Contacted for comment, Tulfo said the filing of the charges in Cebu was "harassment point and simple."

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Did you know

LAUREANO M. Lanuza was elected after dynamic G. Lanuza, former mayor of the city. Born on Dec. 20, 1915, he became an amateur boxer, soccer player, and after during the Japanese occupation. Lanuza was elected to Congress in 1946 and became mayor in 1963. He was the first Manila mayor to serve three terms. He died on April 15, 1982.

Cyril Zenobarty, Inquirer Research

Scientists may have uncovered 400-year-old Medici family murder

FLORENCE — SCIENTISTS IN ITALY believe they have uncovered a murder — 400 years after it is thought to have taken place.

Historians have long suspected that Francesco I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, and his second wife, Bianca Cappello, died in a case of malaria but were poisoned — by Francesco's brother, Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, who was vying for the dukedom.

On four occasions that slavery remained just that — a theory.

But following a study into the affair forensic and toxicology experts at the University of Florence believe they have uncovered clear evidence of murder by poisoning.

Francesco I died from a lethal dose, but progressive, and the symptoms were compatible with arsenic poisoning," Donatella Lippi, a professor of history of medicine and a member of the study, published in the British Medical Journal on Dec. 22, told The Associated Press.

As readers, art connoisseurs and historians of things, the Medici Syndicated list contains in the rough and tumble alliances of old Europe, ruling that the city of Florence then Tuscany from 1609 to 1737.

Francesco I died (from 1574 until his death Oct. 17, 1587, at age 46, 11 days after first taking to his bed and a few hours before his wife.

Dominick Passantino Mori, Aldo Polentini, Gualberto Bertoli and Lippi exhumed and tested bones from Francesco's grave in the Medici chapels in Florence, as well as other remains found in the grave in a crypt about 20 km west of Florence. Bianca's grave was never found.

Tests on the bones' hairs proved inconclusive. One sample of Francesco's liver taken from the crypt showed levels of arsenic that were "significantly higher" than those normally found in humans, the researchers said.

But if Francesco was murdered, who did it?

Experts say that, though there is no proof, livelihoods was the only person with an obvious motive. He assumed his brother's dukedom, and his behavior at the time was suspicious — for example, he took charge of his brother's illness, compiling the medical bulletins and transmitting the gravity of Francesco's illness to dignitaries in the Holy See.

After their deaths, he ordered intermediate autopsies — an unusual step which could have been design to cover up misdeeds.

"These important findings, in addition to the historical data collected on the events before and after the almost simultaneous deaths of the grand-ducal couple, allow us to describe the historical reconstruction of these events," the study said.

The only surprising aspect is that Ferdinando — who had an interest in alchemy and chemistry and was suspected of having poisoned his first wife — could have been put, instead so easily and so quickly, said Richard J. Hamilton, a medical historian at Drexel University, Philadelphia. AP

WorldBriefs

Belarus slaps duty on Russian oil exports

MINSK — Belarus slapped big new charges on Russian oil refining in the latest spat between the two former Soviet republics Wednesday, causing headaches for refineries in northern Europe and further unsettling the latest crisis-ridden ties with the Kremlin. Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko — who has clashed with Russia's Kremlin over Belarus' refusal to pay higher duty of $90 per tonne on Russian crude exports for Minsk-run refining subsidiaries on energy supplies to Europe — first withdrew barrels of oil a day or about a fifth of Russian exports, pass through Belarus. Most of that crude goes to refiners in Poland and Germany. Market watchers said the latest duty would not only disrupt world oil prices or cause shortages but it was likely to cause short-term disruption to the supply chain of oil flows to Poland and Germany, both of the Belarus's alternative suppliers of crude. Reuters

British teen youngest to sail Atlantic alone

LONDON — A 16-year-old British schoolboy has become the youngest person to sail single-handed across the North Atlantic Ocean after pushing his 40-foot boat into open waters. His spokesperson said Wednesday. Michael Perham battled shark-infested waters and huge waves since taking three months off school and setting sail from the tiny British dependent territory of Gibraltar, off southern Spain, on Nov. 11. "It feels absolutely fantastic to have made the North Atlantic crossing in my own boat, alone, safely to Miami," he told BBC television from the Caribbean island of Antigua, where the school was greeted by a short band and a welcoming party of locals. "It was a really fantastic trip. I enjoyed almost every minute of it," he said following the 3,000-nautical-mile voyage during the trade-winds Red Bull Youngsters Challenge. Lonely Planet/AFP

Bush intel chief resigns to become Rice's deputy

WASHINGTON — U.S. President George W. Bush's top intelligence official, John Negroponte, is resigning to become Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's deputy, a senior official said Wednesday. Mr. Negroponte's resignation came just days before Bush is expected to announce his new strategy for Iraq, where Negroponte served as ambassador for 15 months before taking over as the first U.S. Director of National Intelligence in April 2005. Although he said in interviews earlier this year that he would remain in the intelligence community, Negroponte, 67, has agreed to return to the State Department with an unspecified deputy secretary of state. Reuters/Staff

HOT DESTINATIONS
TOURISTS and tourmasses walk in front of the 60-foot Buddha statue at Bodhgaya, India, in this July 3, 2006, photo. Destinations in Asia and river cruises in Europe are among the hottest new trends in travel in 2007 begins.

Jakarta seeks missing plane with foreign help

JAKARTA, INDONESIA — US and Singapore air force planes were Thursday set to join a massive air, land and sea search for a missing Indonesian passenger jet with 102 people on board.

The Adam Air Boeing 737-400, with 96 passengers and six crew vanished from radar screens Monday halfway through a flight from Surabaya, on crowded Java island, to Manado, on the northeastern of Sulawesi island.

Reports by officials Tuesday that the wreckage and some survivors had been found near remote jungle-covered mountain near Polewali in the west turned out to be false after marine teams combed the area.

The search area was now concentrating on the sea off Majene, 40 kilometers west of Polewali, as well as areas inland based on coordinates from intense signals from the plane and locals' reports of debris.

Bad weather and the rugged landscape of the mountainous island were hampering the search, officials said.

An Indonesian air force plane taking part in the search was forced by bad weather conditions to make an emergency landing Wednesday, the Antara news agency said.

Four navy warships carrying divers were using sonar to try to locate any plane wreckage under water, Lieutenant Colonel Iwan Setiadi, Eastern Fleet Command spokesperson, said.

"The four ships will search the waters the Adam Air plane was supposed to have cruised in its journey," he told Antara.

One of the ships was diverted from the search for survivors of a ferry accident. The boat sank off Java last week.

A Singapore air force plane with 27 personnel landed Wednesday evening.

Six air force aircraft were expected. Thursday, armed forces commander Djoko Suyanto said.

On the ground, marine teams have been scouring the forests and hills of West Sulawesi up to the Tana Toraja regency, about 75 km southeast of Polewali.

"For today (Thursday) our search will concentrate on the Tana Toraja area," said Surabaya district chief Sunarto, one of the leaders of the multiservice transport and communications commission, who was at Polewali to take part in search.

"One of the last (distress) signals detected was from the Kalosipat area in Tana Toraja regency. We will scour the area by air as by land it is much more difficult," he told Antara radio.

"We will fly there using a helicopter as we can go really low to look for a crash site." Rescue teams were facing problems in the search of the rugged area.

"It is mainly two problems. One is the geophysical challenges of the landscape as there are no radio satellite signals problems in the rural satellite areas with proper GPS (global positioning system) here," Ismail said.

"A functional satellite navigation system is really needed in these conditions. It is a challenge to receive radio signals in this region," he said.

Aircraft accidents are not uncommon in Indonesia, a vast archipelago nation stretching over 5,000 km. AFP

Special force called in to fight bloody Rio crime wave

RIO DE JANEIRO — NEW RIO DE Janeiro Governor Sergio Cabral said Wednesday an elite police unit would soon take the lead in fighting a bloody crime wave in the state that has killed 24 people in a week.

Cabral, 46, said the National Security Force would first patrol the state border to prevent arms, drug smuggling and criminals from fleeing, but that by mid-year it would also deploy on the state capital's Rio de Janeiro.

Besides an alarming rise in gang activity in the city, heavily armed gunmen lately have begun operations specifically attacking police stations, barracks and even police transport, leaving 29 civilians, police and gang members killed in the past seven days.

In the wake of what some politicians believe is a politically motivated killing spree, gang members last Thursday torched a bus, killing seven passengers.

The violence raised concerns of authorities since it coincided with New Year's Eve celebrations that typically draw hundreds of thousands of tourists to the city and its famed Copacabana and Ipanema beaches.

Cabral, who was sworn in on Monday, said he decided to "particularly" deploy the special police force in the state after an "extremely urgent" meeting Wednesday with federal, military and state security officials.

Made up of 7,500 elite police officers from some of Brazil's 26 states, the National Security Force was formed in June 2004 by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to deal with emergency situations. It has since been deployed three times in the states of Espirito Santo and Minas Gerais do Sul. AFP

Cabral also announced that very shortly he would request Lula send the armed forces into Rio de Janeiro to back local police and military units in fighting crime in the city slums.

Lula, who was also sworn in Monday for his second mandate, branded the surge in violence in Rio as "unwelcome" and said he was considering proposing new laws to increase punishment for criminals. AFP

High-speed trains for Taiwan

TAIPEI, TAIWAN — TAIWAN'S long-delayed high-speed rail system geared up Thursday to welcome its first paying passengers amid lingering safety concerns and embarrassing ticketing glitches.

The 345-billion New Taiwan dollar ($10.5 billion euro/7.4 billion) system, which begins limited service Friday, will run half-hour-long between Taipei and the southern city of Kaohsiung by more than half, from four hours to 90 minutes.

First conceived of more than 20 years ago, the system represents a colossal effort to provide state of the art transportation solutions to Taiwan's 23 million people, while saving energy and preserving the environment.

But in the final countdown to launch, the problems that have dogged it for more than a decade resurfaced apparently.

Full-price tickets for the limited service period, which is expected to last at least two days, went on sale Tuesday amid widespread system glitches.

Thousands called TV stations showing angry ticket buyers complaining about being unable to use credit cards, or receiving the wrong change from ticket machines.

Chao Shiu-ing of the Taiwan High Speed Rail Corp., the operator of the new system, apologized for the setback.

"We are not satisfied with the way things are going," she said. "But the situation will improve day by day."

The widening glitches followed criticism about the project's numerous delays and questions about its safety standards.

Construction of the system began in 2000 with an original launch date of October 2005, but a delay in the completion of the project's complicated systems forced a postponement to October 2006. AP

TAIWAN'S much-anticipated bullet train will finally go in to service on Jan. 1, linking the island's north and south and dramatically altering its economic landscape.

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The WORLD

Edna Lorenzo B. Bueno

Iraq defers hanging of Saddam aides

BAGHDAD—IRAQ POSTponed hanging two of Saddam Hussein's henchmen Thursday amid international pressure following the ousted dictator's bungled and much criticized hanging.

Meanwhile, two junior ministry guards are being held for questioning in connection with the secret filming of Saddam's final moments.

Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti, Saddam's half brother and former intelligence chief and Awad Ahmed al-Bandar, the head of the revolutionary court, were to have been hanged on Thursday after the end of Eid al-Adha holiday.

But a senior official from Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's office, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the executions was postponed "due to international pressure."

Rules of deep, an influential Shiite lawmaker from radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's parliamentary bloc, said: "I am sure it will be done on Sunday." On Wednesday, UN spokesperson Michele Montas said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was opposed to the death penalty.

"The Secretary General strongly believes in the wisdom of Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person," she said.

The fully stubborns the call made today by CDH (High Commissioner for Human Rights) Louise Arbour his execution by the government of Iraq in the executions of the death sentences imposed by the Iraqi High tribunal, "she added.

The US military has expressed concern over the manner in which Saddam was hanged, saying it would "have done things differently," and Britain has condemned the making of the video.

On Nov. 5, Saddam, Barzan and Iraqi senior Awad Hamed Bandar found guilty of ordering the judicial murder 148 Shiite men and boys from the village Dujail in the 1980s, and sentenced to death for crimes against humanity.

Saddam's execution five days ago has angered many of his Sunni Muslim minority and triggered criticism from observers who felt he was humiliated minutes before pay to death.

A top Iraqi official denied deliberately his conduct.

"Where were the humiliations? The shouting of the crowd?" demanded Iraq's National Security Advisor Mowaffaq al-Rubaie, who was present at the execution, during an interview on CNN.

A grisly unofficial video released after Saddam was hanged showed one of the members of the execution party shouting the name of radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, a fierce opponent of Saddam.

The video, of unknown origin, also has a mobile telephone camera has spread like wildfire on the Internet and triggered angry outbursts within the Sunni Arab community of Iraq and from international leaders.

One of the guards present at the execution could be heard shouting "Muqtada! Muqtada! Muqtada!" at a recovering Saddam, prompting some observers to compare the execution to a sectarian lynching.

"Basically they were doing their conspiratorial prayers at the execution, and they mentioned at the end of their supplication the name of Muqtada," Rubaie said.

"I can't see where is the humiliation, to be quite honest. Muqtada, Muqtada, Muqtada is not a dirty word, not an obscene word, they were not cursing." Rubaie also explained why the executioners and Iraqi officials danced around Saddam's body after the hanging.

"It's the tradition of the hangs...where they do something they dance around the body and they express their feelings," he said.

"What is wrong with that? If that upsets the feelings of some of the spectators and Arab rulers, I think: The best of luck to them."

"To the best of my knowledge and belief after I left the scene I was proud of what had happened and it was played by the book, but when the video was released I saw some disrespectful and this has to be addressed," he said.

Shiite deputy Sayeid Ashari, who was also present at Saddam's execution, said Iran justice ministry guards had been held for questioning.

"Two guards who are employees of the justice ministry have been held, but there are no charges against them yet," he told AFP. AFP

A JORDANIAN woman holds a picture of Saddam during a protest against his execution, in Amman Jan. 3. AP/FILE

From Saddam, a florid farewell to Iraqis

By Marc Santora and John F. Burns

BAGHDAD, IRAQ—ES LIES IN end days, Saddam Hussein turned to poetry, as often as his source of solace in times of difficulty, inspired by his vision of himself as inseparably tied to those he led.

The poem, "Entitled It," is his only long craft to be wounded from the grave.

It is a mixture of defiance and reflection, but no remorse. No mention of the tens of thousands of lives he was responsible for ruining. His expressions of pride in stubborn resistance.

The poem, flush with florid phrases that were his trademark, begins with a boat voyage like a poem to the love between himself and his people, who were about to lose him.

Dedicated your soul. It is the way real men and you are my soul's beloved.

No house could have sheltered my heart as you have.

He moves quickly to more epic and familiar language. He refers to the foreigners who swept him from power and to the Iraqis who rose to take him to his place.

The enemies have declared attempt into our sea

And he who serves them will be made to weep.

Here we stood our chests on the waves

And will not wet wrinkle before the beast.

The verses were written by Saddam after he was sentenced to death and, according to his relatives, are believed to be his last written words.

A handwritten copy of the poem was passed along by the Iraqi authorities to his family in Tikrit, along with his final will and testament, according to Saddam's cousin Sharyef Obaidi al-Hasan.

Al-Hasan read the poem on the telephone, saying he hoped Saddam's farewell would underline the manner in which the execution was carried out.

Iraqi and US officials confirmed that a poem left among Saddam's belongings at the US military detention center was indeed penned in his cell.

In the poem, Saddam praises those who continue to fight for the Iraqi nation and condemns the "seizers" who have brought ruin through their invasion. He portrays himself as a martyr.

His poetry, like his speeches at the height of his dictatorship, was often obscure, highly alliterative and difficult, even for Arabic speakers, to comprehend fully.

Joseph Hamilton with his style helped him with his double-fold poem. He is more clear when talking about how he sees him until in light of his impending death.

I sacrifice my soul for you and for our nation

Blessed is cheap in hard times.

Saddam had told his official biographer that he cared little what people thought of him when he was alive, but that he hoped to be revered as one of the giants of history—as a Nebuchadnezzar or Saladin—500 years from now. New York Times news service

A CHILD wrapping herself against the cold in Dhaka Jan. 4. AP/FILE

Cold spell kills 17 in Bangladesh

DHAKA, BANGLADESH—A cold spell sweeping northern Bangladesh left at least 17 people dead in past three days while dozens fog disrupted public transportation in the region near the Himalayan foothills, officials said seven reports said Thursday.

The deaths were reported in a region where temperatures dropped to 9 degrees Celsius (48 degrees Fahrenheit), before normal in this tropical, impoverished nation, Liaison Senior of Bangladesh news agency reported.

Most victims were elderly people and children from poor families, the reports said. Many of the victims suffered from fevers, pneumonia or diarrhoea, or died of exposure.

Most Bangladeshi villagers, who live in mud and thatch huts and often cannot afford warm clothes, are poorly equipped for winter than normal weather.

"In winter, people here die more from cold-related illnesses because of malnutrition and lack of timely medical assistance," said Farah Rahman, a doctor at a state-run hospital in the region.

The temperatures fell below normal since New Year's Day or chilly wind sweep the region, shrouded in fog that disrupted traffic, according to the Meteorological Department. AP

Gerald Ford laid to rest in Michigan hometown

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN—FORmer US President Gerald R. Ford was laid to rest on the grounds of his presidential museum after eight days of mourning and remembrance that spanned the country, from the Californian desert to the United States' capital and back to Ford's backyard home.

The burial service at sunset capped the official mourning for the 38th president, whose casket traveled more than 2,700 miles (1,350 kilometers) before reaching its final stop on a hill overlooking a river in the museum in Ford's hometown.

At a graveside service that included a 21-gun salute and a 21-aircraft flyover, Vice President Dick Cheney presented former first lady Betty Ford with the American flag that was draped over her husband's casket.

Earlier, Ford was remembered as a man not afraid to laugh, make tough decisions or listen to the wishes of his fellow citizens, in eulogies delivered during a funeral at the church he regularly attended for six decades.

An honor guard carried the casket inside Grace Episcopal Church, where Ford's defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, and Ford's conservative former US President Jimmy Carter, were among the dignitaries.

His widow, Betty, wiped away tears as she sat with the couple's four children and more than 300 dignitaries and family friends, including Cheney and golfing legend Jack Nicklaus.

"It's now one of ours," Rumsfeld said, "that man made time special and unwind in a dark and dangerous hour for our nation."

Rumsfeld, who recently left his post as President George W. Bush's defense secretary, remembered Ford as a courageous and steady leader who healed the nation after Watergate.

Rumsfeld said the military is considering naming a new aircraft carrier after Ford, a Navy veteran of World War II. Later at the Pentagon, the Navy confirmed that it would make an official announcement in a few weeks.

"Your fitting is second for that the name Gerald R. Ford will guard the high seas for decades to come in defense of the nation he loved so much," he said.

Carter described the close personal friendship he and Ford developed over the years.

"I relished his sound advice," Carter said in his wife, Rosalynn, cried. "I want to thank my predecessor for all he did to heal our land."

Ceremonies were held last week in Southern California, near Ford's retirement home. The mourning then shifted to Washington D.C. before his casket was returned for a 17-hour viewing Tuesday night and Wednesday at the museum.

Thousands of flag-waving mourners lined the roads under sunny skies as the motorcade bearing Ford's casket traveled from the museum to downtown Grand Rapids to the church, before returning to the museum.

The viewing led to be extended Wednesday until nearly noon so everyone in line could pay their respects. Some 17,000 mourners waited hours in the past 24 hours to view the casket, according to Grand Rapids police.

During the burial ceremony, people lined the top of a six-story parking garage and a neighboring office tower to watch events at the museum below.

Capt. Bill Roberts, a spokesperson for the Michigan National Guard, which assisted with the Ford events, said Wednesday evening the president's body had not yet been placed in the ground and could not say exactly when it would happen.

Ford represented Grand Rapids in Congress for 25 years.

Ford, who became president after Richard Nixon resigned, died Dec. 26 at his home in Rancho Mirage, California. He was 93. AP

THE CASKET of former US President Gerald R. Ford is carried from the sanctuary of Grace Episcopal Church in East Grand Rapids, Michigan after the funeral Jan. 3. AL/AFP

Immigrant entrepreneurs shine in US tech startups

By Rachel Konrad

SAN FRANCISCO—FOREIGNborn entrepreneurs were behind one in four technology startups in the United States over the past decade, according to a study to be published Thursday.

A team of researchers at Duke University estimated 52.3 percent of technology and engineering companies started between 1995 and 2005 had founders, chief executives, presidents or chief technology officers who were born outside the United States. That is nothing given that just 11.7 percent of the US population is foreign-born, according to US Census data.

Immigrant entrepreneurs' companies employed 450,000 workers and generated $52 billion in sales in 2005, according to the survey.

"Into manufacturing or corporate offices, engineers and US companies innovate in the global technology sector offers a counterpoint to the recent political debate over immigration and the economy, which largely centers on unskilled, illegal workers in low-wage jobs.

"It's one thing if your gardener gets deported," said the project's lead researcher, Vivek Wadhwa. "But if these entrepreneurs leave, we're really shooting our intellectual property in the foot."

Immigrants were most likely to start companies in the semiconductor, communications and software niches. They were least likely to enter the defense sector.

One of the study's biggest surprises was the extent to which building and the entrepreneurial path. Of an estimated 7,100 tech startups founded by immigrants, 26 percent have Indian founders, CEOs, presidents or head researchers, the study found. AP

WHAT'S INSIDE
■ Reyes begins Derby Classic title defense /A22

SPORTS
Editor Tobbie S. Melendres

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Valero tells Pacman: Fight me, cab driver

IT TOOK JUST 72 SECONDS for knockout artist Edwin Valero to prove just how brutal he can be with his fists.

VALERO: Waiting

In less time than that, he showed he could be brutal with his words, too.

Valero dared Filipino ring sensation Manny Pacquiao to face him in the ring, saying he would be more than willing to face the pound-for-pound top among the supposed "knock-down" list of opponents the Venezuelan has floored.

He asked Valero issued the dare on the heels of reports that Pacquiao had described as "ridiculous" the challenges the undefeated South American had dubbed on the way to a spotless 23-0 record.

"I want Manny Pacquiao now. [and I] hope [Bob] Arum is listening," the reigning WBA superfeatherweight titleholder was quoted as saying by boxingscene@aol.com. "I don't want to hear from Manny a lot of excuses to fight me in the time it use fight will happen, he will realize that he, too, is a cab driver."

Valero is hoping that in a fight against Pacquiao, he can prove that the Filipino, too, can be knocked out using the list of so-called "victims" he has faced.

The latest Valero victim was Mexican challenger Michael Lozada, whom the Venezuelan destroyed in just 72 seconds in Tokyo, Japan, Wednesday night, bringing to 19 the number of opponents he has stopped in the first round.

Actually, Valero, who calls Japan his home, won his first 15 bouts via first-round stoppages. Only four opponents managed to last more than one round—Genaro Francisco lasted two rounds, while ex-WBA champ Vicente Mosquera was stopped in the 10th round of their world title duel.

But not everybody in Team Valero agrees the hard-puncher is ready to face an equally powerful southpaw like Pacquiao, who also has tremendous hand speed to complement his punishing pressure.

Valero's Japanese promoter Akihiko Honda, in an interview with Japanese media, stressed earlier that Valero is not yet ready for Pacquiao in 2007, but will be available next year.

Pacquiao is currently weighing his options as to his next opponent on April 28 in Macau, China, and Valero is one of the names being submitted to him as a possible opponent.

"I can fight already but the earliest would be April," Pacquiao, voted as Ring Magazine's 2006 Fighter of the Year, said Wednesday. Pacquiao is currently in a crossfire between Bob Arum's Top Rank and Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions. Salvio Laguardia, contributor

HARRY: Pacquiao in no hurry to take on the relatively unknown Valero.

FUMBLEROOSKI and Roger Yap get the better of Sta. Lucia and Alex Cabagnot during Wednesday's playoff for an outright quarterfinal slot.

Realtors tackle Express; Aces take on Tigers

GAMES TODAY (Araneta Coliseum)
4:30 p.m. — Shoemart Gilas Cola
7:30 p.m. — Sta. Lucia vs. NLEX

INDEFATIGABLE COACH TONG Generoso sounded like he knew perfectly well what he was talking about—even though he was talking of a situation equal.

"They will pick up the pieces, they have the tools to do so," Generoso said Wednesday night, referring to Sta. Lucia, the team his Shoemart Gilas hopes to make the quarterfinals of the Talk 'N' Text Philippine Cup.

From no high up in the standings and now down to the mediocre, the Realtors start picking up the pieces tonight when they clash with the NLEX Express to open the solid-seed phase at the Araneta Coliseum (9:30).

This is a round we one thought the Realtors would be in, especially after they are the pace for long stretches in the elimination round.

But Sta. Lucia lost most of the games it needed to win late in the round, including a 78-93 decision to the defending champion Purefoods in their KO game for the last outright quarterfinal spot.

The Realtors will open solid-cored action still on top-10 by four teams field with a 10-8 record under their belt after the elimination, three games ahead of the Express whom they clash at 7:30 p.m.

Alaska, in second place with an 11-7 slate, and the 5-13 Gasoline Tigers collide in the first game at 4:30 p.m.

Tournament format calls for any team to earn a playoff with the natural twice-to-beat if it sweeps the solid-seed phase. This is the only option available, it seems, to the Aces, Express and the Tigers, with Sta. Lucia enjoying a commanding lead.

Since the phase will just be a single round, the Realtors could wind up with the top ranking, and a quarterfinals berth, even if they win just one of three games.

Billy Williams has already taken over the Realtors, but the super rookie has not gotten much help from the old reliables like Dennis Espino, Marlou Aquino and Paolo Mendoza. —Manuel R. Cortillo

MVP-Jinggoy agreement sparks optimism at POC

By Jose Navarro

PHILIPPINE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE PRESIDENT Jose "Peping" Cojuangco yesterday expressed optimism that the agreement forged by the country's basketball leaders will push through.

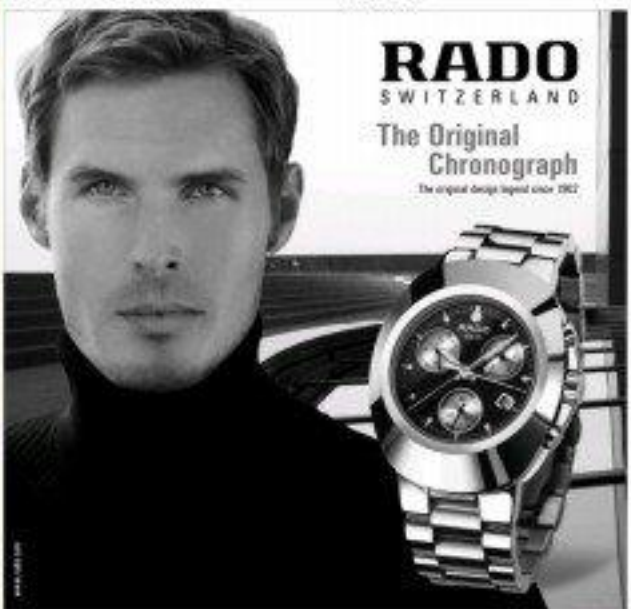
Telecommunications magnate Manny V. Pangilinan and SBP head Sen. Jinggoy Estrada had struck a deal during the holidays in an effort to end the power struggle between the SBP and Philippine Basketball and pave the way for the hosting of the Fiba International basketball federation's congress on the country.

"With the sum of events, the Basketball Association of the Philippines has no choice but to concur," said Cojuangco.

"If they block it, that act will only add up to the pieces of evidence that we could present in the court of arbitration and the like."

Under the agreement, Estrada will sit as chair and Pangilinan as president of the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER



Go goes as Cojuangco's special assistant

FOR SO FINE FOR, IT'S TIME TO GO.

The controversial president of the Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association officially severed ties with Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco on Wednesday when he tendered his resignation as Special Assistant to the POC head.

"It is with deep regret that I irrevocably resign my position as Special Assistant to the POC president effective immediately," Go wrote in a letter to Cojuangco Jnr. 3.

Recent developments that have affected my working relationship with some members of the POC Executive Committee have made my situation untenable," he added.

Just meeting last Dec. 20, Go got involved in a near fight with Albino POC executive committee member Atty. Mariano Pacunuela and Buddy Andrada after a heated argument over Go's alleged involvement in a move to oust fellow Tennis Association of the Philippines head Dodot Valdeavilla.

"It is my sincere hope that I did not violate your trust and confidence during my stint," Go added. "I assure you that I will continue to support your administration.

Go ended his letter by thanking Cojuangco "for the opportunity which further enriched my appreciation of the Olympic movement."

POC spokesman Tony Siaosioco said Cojuangco received Go's letter Wednesday night, but declined to comment pending a meeting with Go next week.

Go was appointed to the instrumental POC-Cojuangco's initiation to the POC hierarchy in 2005 after a falling out with then POC president Jose "Cito" Cuneta. However, Go's relationship with Cojuangco started to turn cold when Go allegedly tried to help the expelled Basketball Association of the Philippines get back into the fold of the Olympic body.

The fact-driven hatred said to be Go's alleged machinations to oust Cojuangco. However, in a statement, some POC executive committee members reportedly asked Go to resign from the committee. But Go, the report added, warned Cojuangco to his fate instead.

Cojuangco refused to make any action against Go, but the athletics head apparently felt he was no longer needed.

He had to let go. —Ray Lustre

GO. Enough of the spat with...

Reyes begins Derby Classic title defense

REYES: Derby champ since 2004

JOSEPH "EARL" REYES AIMS TO EXTEND his dominance in the Derby City Classic when the star-studded tournament begins today at the Executive West Hotel in Sucat-Bo, Parañaque.

The 10-year-old Filipino billiards Hall of Famer has ruled the annual competition since 2004 and is again the top favorite to pocket the $11,000 champion's purse.

Reyes, the 1999 Cardiff World Pool champ from Fuyot Sports station, left on Sept. 1 for the Los Angeles, California.

Another Filipino ace, Francisco "Django" Bustamante, and his manager Bally Vicente left the country on Jan. 2 and have joined Reyes in Kentucky.

After scoring 10 victims in the Derby City Classic on new dining stars Dennis Orcollo and Lassly Velle, both playing under Reyes's Promotion. The duo left on July 3.

In last year's Derby City Classic, Reyes, serving as the emperor of tournament Jason Miller with Filipino-Canadian and 2004 World Nine-Champion Alex Pagulayan finishing third.

Reyes also competed in last year's Derby City Master of the Table where he finished second and won $3,000. Derby City 9-ball, that where he settled for third place worth $4,000, and Derby City Bank tournament where he secured up in 49th place.

Jose "Pepeng" Parica, who led the invasion of Filipino ace aviators in the United States in the mid-1980s, won the 2005 Derby City Classic before Reyes took over.

According to www.AZBilliards.com, Reyes, topped the 2006 season list with total earnings of $644,500, including a record $300,000 after winning the 2006 World 9T 9-ball in Reno, Nevada, last September.

Only a fraction of the World 9T purse has been paid, however, other organizers encounter financial difficulties.

Philippine billiards patron Antares "Paolo" Pryor said that Reyes' impressive performance last year was largely due to the knee surgery on his eye in 2005 to enhance his vision. Marlon Bernardino, contributor

MVP-Jinggoy . . .

From page A24

The MVP was formed after representatives from the SAF and PBA agreed to stick based on a joint communique forged with the Pilots in Tokyo some months back.

Several SAF officials, however, protested Gamboa's move and insisted that the new basketball group should be limited to the

"If they (SAF officials) don't go what they want, they will turn down the agreement," said Cojuangco of the SAF "rebels." "But we in the POC belong to the majority."

The POC chief hinted that another basketball stalemate would force them to seek redress from the courts of arbitration and the Fiba.

"Most out the Fiba duty. Its position of the SAF when everything that was agreed upon in Japan has been carried out" said Cojuangco.

Volleyball to launch nationwide talent search

By Marc Anthony Reyes

HEIGHT AND AGE WILL BE THE KEY REquirements in the nationwide search for talents by the Philippine Volleyball Federation for the men's and women's national teams that will be fielded in the Thailand Southeast Asian Games late this year.

"One objective is excellence in handsome shape," said volleyball chief president Ricky Mendoza yesterday. "We need to identify young talents and put them in training as soon as possible."

Mendoza said at least four training centers all over the country will be set up to facilitate the search for bulk talents from the countryside.

The height requirements for men is at least 6 feet for men and at least 5 feet 9½ for women. Applicants must be 18 years old and younger.

The PVF has set up training centers in Bacolod City for the Visayas, Davao for Mindanao and Baguio City for Luzon. The Metro Manila training center will be at the University of Santo Tomas.

"We are looking for a mixture of homegrown and Filipino-foreign talents," said Mendoza, adding that he has overseas contacts who will handle the recruitment of United States-based Filipinos.

The search is for players to join up from the trainees of the PLDT Home Fibr Powerhitters of Head Master and Team Pascua in the 2005 Philippine Elite Games.

The intensive recruitment program of the association will start this month, according to Mendoza, with trainings to begin in February.

The Philippine women's team aspires to dethrone the Vietnamese, winning the gold medal for the last time in 2003. The men's team has yet to win a gold in the SEAG.

Bacolod may host Asian Youth volley

BACOLOD CITY—AFTER SUCCESSFULLY STAGING a major basketball tournament last year, the city may again host another international event, the Asian Youth Boys' Volleyball Championship in May.

Bacolod may be given the task of hosting the Asian tournament if no one else will step forward to stage it in Manila," said Roger Rañola, chairman of the Philippine Volleyball Federation's competition committee.

Rañola, who now serves as the chair of the PVF Coaching Commission, said other possible cities that can host the tournament are Cebu and Davao after Manila declined to host it.

The PVF will announce the hosting in mid-January. Organizers expect to raise funds for the event to not become a burden to the government. It will be sanctioned by the PVF as a fund-raising activity to pay its P 600,000 entry fee to the international volleyball federation. —Christian Jil San Jose, Inquirer Visayas

Dableo gunning for GM title in Viet Zonals

DABLEO

RONALD DABLEO BECAME AN OUTRIGHT International Master in Vietnam nearly four years ago. Now, he is restarting in search of his grandmaster title.

The 27-year-old Dableo, a strong 2-stack group of Filipinos competing in the Asian Zonals 3.3 Chess Championship slated Jan. 10-19 in Phu Quoc, Kien Giang province.

Dableo won to prominence when, as an unheralded player, he won the 2000 12th Henri Zweel Indo City Meet with 7½ points out of nine (+6 =3 -0) rounds, or GM result and a slot in the 2004 *Pala Mundi* Championship in Tripoli, Libya.

Later in December 2000, Dableo helped the Philippine squad shoot home to the gold medal in the Southeast Asian Games held in Jakarta and Bali, Indonesia.

"Vietnam seems to be a lucky place for me," Dableo said in Filipino. "My life as a player changed when I won the Zonals in 2000."

"I'm hoping that my luck will continue in Vietnam this year," added Dableo, who obtained his second GM result in the 2006 FIDE International Open held in Manila in December.

Other Filipino young aspirants in the Zonals, which offers two slots for the World Championships, are Olympiad Pangan, Rogelio Antonio Jr. and Eugene Torre, Bel Paulo Sr., Oliver Barbosa, Darwin Leyte and Mark Paragua. Erwin is the dreadful one Cleary Bonadio, WIM Jewelle Mendoza and WNM Kimberly Jane Collantes.

Grandmaster candidate Jayson Gonzales remains undecided whether to play in the nine-round Swiss system event.

Dableo, Leyte and Gonzales only need one GM result to complete their GM status.

National Chess Federation of the Philippines president Joey Sarsosa did bar Rogelio "Bobby" Poliary Jr. alike to produce "at least" four Filipino GMs under his term. —Marlon Bernardino, contributor

Candidates, F. Eastern booters clash for 2nd

CANDIDATES AND Far Eastern University players who are tied for second and third of the Ang Lupa Sa Pilipinas football tournament clash in the encounter at the Marikina Sports Complex.

With sporting 3-1 win-loss marks, Candidates and FEU-Diliman are tied in the 4th spot, signaling game of a triple-bill.

Sphere (5-3) and Far Eastern (3-4) take to the pitch at 1 p.m. before Ironmanship Aaron Tuason (5-0-1) battles Sentinel (3-2) at 3 p.m. in the tournament's opening match played by Philippine National Women's Football Association, sponsored by Mizuno and backed by the Marikina City government of Mayor Marides Fernando.

"Now is the time the teams have more or less settled down, we can look forward to close matches and keener competition," said tournament director Coffee Partido.

Compared mainly of national pool members, the Candidates are slight favorites over the FEU boosters who they tore, 1-0, in the first round last Oct. 15.

FEU-Diliman can still salvage that, however, and are expected to be tougher to beat this time.

EARLY BIRDS: Top American bowlers (from left, top row) Roger Roberts, Joe Bardfield, Richard Lanier and Johnny Phillips (bottom left) are among the expected early arrivals for the World Bowling Cup slated Jan. 14, 15 and 20 at the Rizal Coliseum. The derby champ's team their comeback as attempt to repeat conditions early, according to organizers. The Filipino defending champions are Dicky Lim, Joel Fernando, Hans Alcala and Philip Chongson.

SPORTSWATCH

'PBA (Ang Bagong Lara)' starts Sunday

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF PRO BASKETBALL GETS A REFRESHING LOOK AS the Philippine Basketball Association launches the new 30-minute magazine show "PBA (Ang Bagong Lara)" beginning this Sunday, to be hosted by magazine columnist and movie actress Pilar Pilapil. The weekly show is actually the first venture of PBA Entertainment arm, TV production. "Unique PBA fans will support this new undertaking the way they have been supporting the league in the past 30 years," said vice-chairman Rikki Cua. The TV show offers inside stories, scoops and behind-the-scenes features. The league's latest superstars and rookies will be featured in the show, which will air during the 2006-07 season and aimed at underplay on the game, made by the league last year, when it enjoyed considerable increase in both its gross and net revenues.

Pasay Cockers derby today Jan. 5

NINETY FIGHTERS ARE ON SET AT THE COCKY TODAY OF THE 2006 PASAY Cockpit Cockers Association (PCCA) 5-cock derby arena at the Pasay City Cockpit. The derby, sponsored by Tanduay Consumer 2000, starts at 9 p.m. PR manager Eric dela Pena said the cockpit and with the highest purse second after the cancelled derby series cockpit after the Pasay City Derby. Computerized matching will be adopted to make the selection more exciting and unpredictable, said dela Pena. Another big event looms at the same venue on Jan. 5, 11 and 12 as the 2006 WEATHERTECH Championship Derby. Pasay Cockers Derby Champion Cocks Pacesetter and Pop Derby "Boy" Sumaya MD, Parañaque Vice Mayor Cornelio Cruz and many others in the 2006 USA World Championship, lead the tough list of local participants.

BY TOP CHOICE

Doubleheader opens UAAP s'ball tomorrow

DEFENDING ACTION IN THE UNIVERSITY ATHletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP) starts this weekend with UP and Ateneo clashing in the football opener tomorrow and University of the Eastern taking on Santo Tomas in the second game.

Defending women's softball champion Adamson and baseball titlist University of the Philippines draw opening-day foes.

The UP-Ateneo softball clash starts at 10 a.m. at the University of Santo Tomas field in Sampaloc right after brief opening ceremonies.

The Lady Falcons, the perennial UAAP championship contenders, open against the Lady Eagles Wednesday at their match, also at the UST field gals, University of the Philippines against Santo Tomas.

Baseball at the Rizal Memorial ball park on Sunday will pit UST against Adamson at 9 a.m. after the 8 a.m. opening ceremonies. Ateneo and National U. tangle in the second game.

Defending champion Ateneo will be out to defend its UAAP title for the 10th straight year when it opens its campaign against Adamson, UST and NU duels in the first two Saturday games.

The Lady Maroons, coming off a 66-64 win over Ateneo in the finals of the Philippine Collegiate Championship last December, will be out to retain the team's crown while UST draws the way to the season's dramatized volleyball.

Nash, Arenas torch nets

JUMAL Magloire of the Portland Trail Blazers covers his eyes as he ducks over Rasaldo Ballinger of the New York Knicks. AP

TORONTO—STEVE NASH MARC JEVERAL key shots in the fourth quarter to lead all five starters in double figures as the Phoenix Suns posted their fourth straight win, a 100-94 triumph over the Toronto Raptors.

Canada's Nash scored 13 of his 15 points in the final period for the Suns, who improved to six impressive 13-1 against Eastern Conference opponents. He also handed out nine assists on Wednesday.

"[Nash] never fails," Suns guard Raja Bell said. "It's not very rarely and it's always exactly what we need, whether it be an assist or a big shot. He plays a big factor like he did."

The fourth overall pick in 2005, Chris Bosh had missed the previous 12 games with a bruised left knee. He finished with 26 points, 14 rebounds and two blocks.

"I felt good," Bosh said. "There were times that I was huffing and puffing, but I've worked hard in the past."

Nash's 3-pointer from the right wing gave the Suns a 94-92 advantage with 3:19 left. However, Toronto responded with a three-point play on the next possession to regain a one-point edge.

"We did a great job to come back and never slide to get up into point. And they did a great job, we're finally making some great plays," Raptors rookie Andrea Bargnani said. "We feel like we should have won because we played well."

In Washington, Gilbert Arenas continued his hot streak with a three-pointer at the buzzer to lead the Washington Wizards to a 108-106 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

With the score tied at 106-106, Arenas launched a 32-footer from beyond the top of the key and remained expressionless as it sailed through the net to cap a 33-point night.

"We knew it was going to be a close game but we just wanted to be the aggressor from the game with a win," Arenas, who had 11 rebounds and eight assists, told reporters. "We pulled it out. We fought out hairy all."

"We were not going to run a play at the end of the game," said Arenas. "The play was to get up the court and get a good shot."

Arenas, the Eastern Conference Player of the Month in December after averaging 34.1 points and 6.2 assists, calmly walked to the bench following the game winner as the crowd showed "M-V-P-M-V-P."

"At times it just right...he gets himself in position, and then it was just the flick of the wrist," Wizards coach Eddie Jordan said. "He is amazing." Reuters, AFP

COMPLETE NBA RESULTS: Phoenix 100, Toronto 94; Washington 108, Milwaukee 106; Cleveland 107, Boston 104; LA Clippers 110, Miami 96; Memphis 104, Golden State 100; Minnesota 103, San Antonio 101; LA Lakers 103, Atlanta 96; Charlotte 97, New York 86; Sacramento 97, Houston 93

NBA ON BASKETBALL TV TODAY

11:30 a.m. — LA Lakers vs. Sacramento (replays at 4 p.m. & 9:30 p.m.)

No. 1 drops out of Aussie Open

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA—JUSTINE Henin-Hardenne has withdrawn from the Australian Open for undisclosed personal reasons.

Australian Open spokesman John Lindsay confirmed Thursday that Henin-Hardenne—the No. 1 women's player in the world—withdrew from the tournament that begins Jan. 15 in Melbourne. She was the runner-up last year.

Lindsay said Australian Open officials checked with the women's tennis star after the Belgian player withdrew earlier Thursday from next week's Sydney International and were told Henin-Hardenne would not be playing in the first Grand Slam tournament of the year either.

No official reason was given, although Henin-Hardenne was expected to release a statement Friday.

Sydney International tournament director Craig Watson and senior officials from the WTA Tour informed fans of Henin-Hardenne's decision on Thursday.

"I was told the withdrawal was for personal reasons," Watson said. "Obviously we are very disappointed. Justine is our defending champion.

"I believe she's quite upset and we certainly wish her the best and hope she is able to recover in the coming very soon."

Amelie Mauresmo, who won the Australian Open and Wimbledon last year, will take over as the top seed for the Sydney tournament, which begins Monday.

Henin-Hardenne, 24, won the French Open last season and reached the final at the three other majors before capping 2006 with a win in the season-ending WTA Tour Championships.

She had a 64-8 record in 2006. AP

No more second chances for Tyson–lawyer

TYSON: Drug charges

PHOENIX—FOR the last heavyweight boxing champ Mike Tyson was charged Wednesday with drug possession and driving under the influence of drugs, and the top prosecutor of Arizona's most populous county wants to send him to prison.

"He has run out of second chances, at least in my book," Maricopa County Attorney Andrew Thomas said in a news conference.

Tyson, 40, was charged with two felonies for drug possession and misdemeanor counts of driving under the influence of drugs. If convicted of all four charges, he could be sentenced to between 2 1/4 and 7 1/2 years.

The charges stem from his arrest Friday in Scottsdale, where Tyson was stopped in his car after having a nightclub. An officer found bags of cocaine in his back pocket and another in a package of cigarettes in his car, according to court records.

Tyson's criminal attorney Thomas Sheldon, didn't return phone calls Wednesday from The Associated Press.

Tyson's arrest was his latest legal entanglement, during more than a decade.

In 1992, Tyson was convicted of rape in Indiana. Six years later, the former boxing champ pleaded no contest to misdemeanor assault charges in Maryland.

Thomas said Tyson's record makes him eligible for prison time instead of intensive drug treatment programs for nonviolent offenders.

"I don't take any pleasure out of doing this," Thomas said. "It took ago, six kids and I were watching Rocky Balboa on the movie theater, and we saw Mike Tyson make a cameo appearance in the movie, and now here we are and he's looking at going back to prison."

Tyson became the youngest heavyweight champion in history in 1986, when at 20 he knocked out Trevor Berbick. Four years later he was knocked out by James "Buster" Douglas. AP

THE
ADVANTAGE HOUR
6:00 - 9:00pm Daily

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SPORTS

TORI Leviste does an obstacle on board Ghibi Pacinos on Jewish at the recent 15th Asian Games in Doha, Qatar

Leviste breaks old barrier in World Cup Arab League

TOP FILIPINO EQUESTRIENNE TORI LEVISTE has been invited to compete in the World Cup Arab Jumping League, the first non-Arab to be accorded the honor in the event slated Jan. 13 to March 23 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Sheikh Mohamad Al Thani of the royal Qatari family invited Leviste to the event that started in 2004 exclusive to Arab participants.

The Dubai inaugural will be followed by stops in Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Algeria, all in the United Arab Emirates, Doha Museum, Bahrain, Doha, Qatar, and finally in Damascus, Syria.

Sports patron Jose Henri Lladoc, who continues to support Leviste, expressed pride over the equestrienne's participation.

"It is our privilege to be part of a billion-\$\$ sport's participation in this prestigious event," said Lladoc. "Tori is making history by being the first non-Arab to be invited to this tournament."

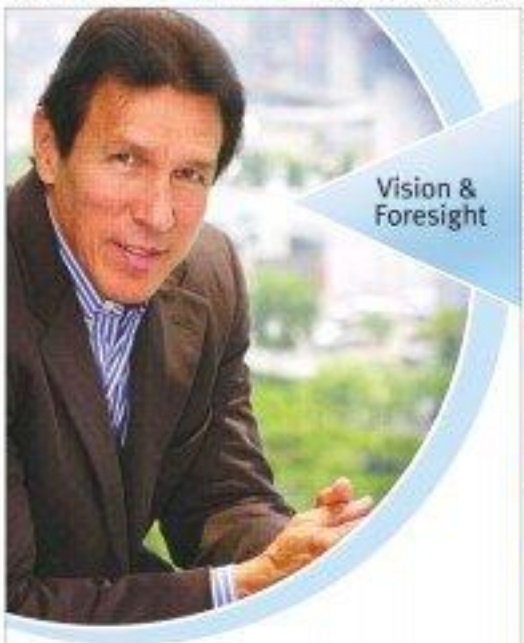
Leviste won the World Cup Southeast Asian Jumping League in 1999 and 2005.

In her debut in the Arabian League, Leviste will be vying for Doha Asian Games winner, the Swedish team Ulrika Pleijelsen And Jewels.

Philippine equestrian manager Carmen Cuenco-Isada will accompany Leviste.

Members of Checkmate teams known tomorrow

CHESS. SELECTION TOURNAMENT for members of the United States- and Asia-bound Nike Checkmate team begins at 10 a.m. tomorrow at Greenbelt 2B of Ayala Center in Makati City. Players not to be selected by the 17 semifinalists who advance from the two-elimination series that concluded Wednesday. The first slot in the 12-man Checkmate team has been reserved for 11-year-old Nikolai Kosh of Ateneo de Manila Academy, for his fine showing in the unrated section of the 20th World Open. Six Grandmasters may enter the US-bid tour. Double-elimination matches—8 rounds, 10 minutes, 10 seconds, time elapse—the selection tourney is organized each year by Metropolitan Chess Club.



Freddie Webb had both.

As a legislator, Senator Webb had the foresight to author the PhilHealth bill, which has benefited countless Filipinos.

Years later, when his eyesight began to fail him, he availed of the same PhilHealth benefits and chose American Eye Center to bring back his vision. He opted for a multifocal lens implant, the latest intraocular lens which provides good distance and reading vision to allow him a spectacle-free, active lifestyle.

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AMERICAN EYE CENTER

TORIBIO CUP VOLLEY

SSC, Hope take it

SAN SEBASTIAN COLLEGE-MANILA TOOK the boys' crown and Hope Christian High School the girls' title in the recent sixth FC Toribio Volleyball Cup at the University of the East (UE) gym.

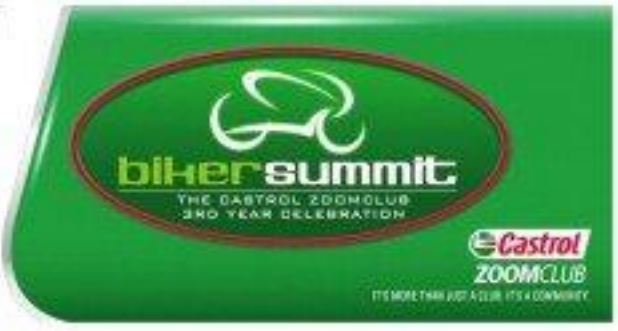
San Sebastian defeated Ateneo La Salle-Cavite, 20-25, 25-16, 25-15, 25-20, in the boys' final of the tournament held in honor of Francisco Toribio, the UAAP volleyball coach who steered UE to a string of title victories.

Cavanna made Lipa City proud by taking third place at the expense of University of Santo Tomas, 20-25, 25-19, 25-19, in the annual event organized by UE sports director Benny Perez.

Hope Christian, meanwhile, overpowered UE, 25-9, 25-20, 25-18, to dominate the girls' contest. Former champion UE was third after beating San Sebastian de Bulan College, also of Lipa City, 25-21, 25-23, 25-15.

Division tussles (one) in each of the boys' and girls' divisions of the tournament that was alternately played at the UE Gym 5 in Manila and in Cainta.

The teams were from 10, ISYL Lourdes School Mandaluyong, Claret School, School of Saint Anthony-Lagro, Holy Trinity Academy, Inner Sanctum, De La Salle-Lipa, Hope Christian, San Sebastian, Lyceo, Diliman Preparatory School, UP Integrated School, San Antonio De Padua College, Philippine Institute of Quezon City, Holy Trinity Valenzuela National High, San Beda College-Taytay and Rosman National High.



CURRENCIES

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

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Way cleared for transfer of Maynilad stake

Lenders back down from their demand to be paid first

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE METROPOLITAN Waterworks and Sewerage System may now proceed with the transfer of its stake in Maynilad Water Services Inc. to the winning bidder of the utility after creditors of the firm unconditionally yesterday gave their consent to the re-privatization deal.

Minority shareholder Suez Environnement (formerly Ondeo Services), and Maynilad lender Deutsche Bank AG, have submitted to the rehabilitation court their consent to the transaction between the regulator MWSS and the group that would acquire the west zone concession, DMCI Holdings and Metro Pacific Corp.

A third creditor, Avenue Asia Special Situation Fund, yesterday failed to submit its consent along with the others. But according to a lawyer, the matter is now for the rehabilitation court to decide.

Judge Reynaldo B. Daway of Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 95 yesterday said that, since there appeared to be no opposition from among the parties concerned, the court in effect would allow the MWSS to close the deal with the new private operator of the water concession.

Maynilad's creditors last week demanded partial payment of what the former concessionaire owed them, before they could give their consent to the deal. Core investments, led by tycoon Democrito Mendoza of the DMCI, opposed the move, saying that the government would need to close the deal first with the winning bidders before the DMCI-MPC consortium could put up the money to partially pay the creditors.

The DMCI-MPC lawyers last week hared that the government, through the MWSS, would be saddled with Maynilad's debts, after the lenders announced their intentions to withhold their consent.

The DMCI-MPC consortium won the bid to

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Photos by George Tapan

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Realty firms in P10-B deal

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

PROPERTY FIRMS EQUITY (ASIA) CORP. (ELC) and Landco Pacific Corp. have teamed up to develop a P10-billion residential project on ELC's 8.7 hectare property in Mandaluyong City.

ELC president Ramon Lorenzo Jr. said the project would take about 7-10 years to develop and would consist of 4,500 units.

Under the terms of the joint venture agreement, ELC will contribute its property, or Kilometer 15 East Service Road of the Manila South Expressway, while Landco will contribute funds and expertise to the development.

Landco, a unit of Metro Pacific Investment Corp., is a major real estate developer that is engaged in high-end residential towers and leisure farms.

BPI sells Far East unit to Tiu group

By Doris C. Dumlao

BANK OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS (BPI) said it is ready to sell Far East Savings Bank to the Tiu group that develops and operates several sports arenas, such as the Discovery Suites.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, BPI vice president Cecilia Gonzalez said the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas had approved the sale of BPI's 100 percent stake in Far East Savings Bank to JTKC Equities Inc., formerly Equitable Inc. and Star Equities Inc.

BPI did not say however, for how much it sold its stake in the JTKC group.

The new owners plan to improve the thrift bank's operations, add more branches and rename it Sterling Bank of Asia Inc.

The purchase marks the return of the Tiu family to the banking sector after it sold its 16.56-percent stake in International Exchange Bank last year to Union Bank of the Philippines for about P1 billion.

Aside from real estate, the Tiu group has interests in finance and manufacturing of construction materials and industrial chemicals.

Far East Savings Bank was one of the subsidiaries that BPI acquired as part of the merger of the Bank and Trust Co. which it acquired in 2000.

BPI, the country's third largest banking group, said the sale unit is already has subsidiaries involved in similar businesses.

Its upcoming subsidiaries include BPI Family Savings Bank, BPI Direct Savings Bank (for overseas Filipino workers), BPI Leasing Corp. and BPI International Finance Ltd. Hong Kong.

St. Peter Life Plan Certificate as Dealer of Pre-Need Life Plans renewed for 2007

The Securities and Exchange Commission, after considering the completion of all prescribed requirements, has renewed on December 13, 2006 the registration of "ST. PETER LIFE PLAN, INC." as a Dealer of Pre-Need Life Plans to the Philippines valid from January 1, 2007 until December 31, 2007 per SEC Pre-Need Order No. 372 Series of 2006.

ST. PETER LIFE PLAN, INC. continually aspires for the choice of every Filipino in the delivery of world class Death Care services and is an active and progressive partner in nation building.

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Currencies

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United States	Dollar	53.0000	53.0000	53.0000
Japan	Yen	0.4493	0.4493	0.4493
United Kingdom	Pound	1.0414	1.0414	53.1390
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.6810	0.6810	6.7734
Switzerland	Franc	0.4165	0.4165	39.8249
Canada	Dollar	0.4490	0.4490	41.7170
Singapore	Dollar	0.3476	0.3476	32.3068
Australia	Dollar	0.4139	0.4139	38.4670
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.1413	0.1413	13.1309
United Arab Emirates	Dirham	0.1442	0.1442	13.4006
Brunei	Dollar	0.3456	0.3456	32.1120
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.0059	0.0059	0.5481
Thailand	Baht	0.1393	0.1393	12.9449
EMU	Euro	0.7000	0.7000	65.0470
Kuwait	Dinar	0.1836	0.1836	17.0615
Qatar	Riyal	0.1456	0.1456	13.5321
Sweden	Krona	0.0815	0.0815	7.5736
Norway	Krone	0.0855	0.0855	7.9455
Bahrain	Dinar	1.4064	1.4064	130.7155
Kingdom	Riyal	0.1413	0.1413	13.1309
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.1446	0.1446	13.4374
Denmark	Krone	0.0939	0.0939	8.7267
India	Rupee	0.0121	0.0121	1.1249
Philippines	Peso	1.0000	1.0000	92.9250
Taiwan	New Dollar	0.1624	0.1624	15.0921
Macau	Pataca	0.0663	0.0663	6.1625
Korea, Republic	Dollar	0.0562	0.0562	5.2227
Vietnam	Dong	0.0033	0.0033	0.3067
Turkey	Lira	0.0346	0.0346	3.2161

Source: Bankers' Association of the Philippines as of Dec. 21, 2006

Source: Bloomberg as of Dec. 21, 2006

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	Dec. 29, 2006	Dec. 22, 2006
Fixed Income Fund	1.362139	1.224499
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Shares down

Shares on the main board of the Philippine Stock Exchange closed 0.26 percent lower yesterday as profit-taking set in after the market has fresh 10-year highs, dealers said.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index fell 7.99 points to 3,012.74 after trading between 3,020.73 and 2,977.97.

The broader all-share index slipped 5.36 points to 1,872.04.

Losers outnumbered gainers 89 to 58, while 62 stocks ended unchanged.

Volume turnover was 2.9 billion shares worth 94.3 billion.

"The market is taking a breather after the recent rally," said dealer Del Castillo of Tiso Goda Holdings Inc. "A healthy pullback can be expected as the market again starts consolidating." AFP

Way . . .

From page B1

bid when they offered $694 million to acquire the water utility serving Metro Manila's west zone and concession operations for the remaining years of the 25-year concession.

The winning bidder will also have to assume Manila Water Co.'s obligations under a debt and capital restructuring agreement with the MWSS.

"The final award to the winning bidder will guarantee the survival of the west concession that provides water to more than half of Metro Manila," Fernandez said.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CIRCULAR No. 554
Series of 2006

Subject: Submission of Annual Audit Report (AAR)

Pursuant to Monetary Board Resolution No. 1477 dated 30 November 2006, the Manual of Regulations for Banks (MORB) is hereby amended, as follows:

Section 1. The following provisions of Subsection X160.1 on Financial Audit is hereby amended to read, as follows:

"**Sec. X160.1 Financial Audit.** Banks shall cause a annual financial audit by an external auditor acceptable to the BSP not later than thirty (30) calendar days after the close of the calendar year or the fiscal year adopted by the bank. Report of such audit shall be submitted to the board of directors or country head, in the case of foreign bank branches, and the appropriate supervising and examining department of the BSP not later than one hundred twenty (120) calendar days after the close of the calendar year or the fiscal year adopted by the bank. The report to the BSP shall be accompanied by the: (1) Certification by the external auditor on the (a) dates of start and termination of audit; (b) date of submission of the financial audit report and certification under oath stating that no material weakness or breach in the internal control and risk management systems was noted in the course of the audit of the bank or the board of directors or country head and (c) the absence of any direct or indirect financial interest and other circumstances that may impair the independence of the external auditor; (2) Reconciliation statement between the AFS and the balance sheet and income statement for bank proper (regular and FCDU) and trust department submitted on the BSP prescribing copies of adjusting entries (the "RECONCILING ITEMS" and (3) other information that may be required by the BSP."

xxx

"Government-owned or controlled banks, including their subsidiaries and affiliates, as well as other financial institutions under BSP supervision which are under the concurrent jurisdiction of the Commission on Audit (COA) shall be exempt from the aforementioned annual financial audit by an acceptable external auditor: Provided, That when warranted by supervisory considerations such as material weaknesses/breach in internal control and/or risk management systems, the Monetary Board may, upon recommendation of the appropriate supervising and examining department of the BSP, require the financial audit to be conducted by an external auditor acceptable to the BSP at the expense of the institution concerned: Provided, further, That when circumstances such as, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, loans from multilateral financial institutions, privatization, or public listing warrant, the financial audit of the institution concerned by an acceptable external auditor may also be allowed.

BANKS AND OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS UNDER THE CONCURRENT JURISDICTION OF THE BSP AND COA SHALL HOWEVER SUBMIT A COPY OF THE ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT (AAR) OF THE COA TO THE APPROPRIATE SUPERVISING AND EXAMINING DEPARTMENT OF THE BSP WITHIN THIRTY (30) BANKING DAYS AFTER RECEIPT OF THE REPORT BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. THE AAR SHALL BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE (1) CERTIFICATION BY THE INSTITUTION CONCERNED ON THE DATE OF RECEIPT OF THE AAR BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS; (2) RECONCILIATION STATEMENT BETWEEN THE AFS IN THE AAR AND THE BALANCE SHEET AND INCOME STATEMENT OF BANK PROPER (REGULAR AND FCDU) AND TRUST DEPARTMENT SUBMITTED TO THE BSP INCLUDING COPIES OF ADJUSTING/RECLASS ON THE RECONCILING ITEMS; AND (3) OTHER INFORMATION THAT MAY BE REQUIRED BY THE BSP.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF SAID INSTITUTIONS IN A REGULAR OR SPECIAL MEETING, SHALL CONSIDER AND ACT ON THE AAR, AS INCLUDED ON THE COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS THEREIN, AND SHALL SUBMIT, WITHIN THIRTY (30) BANKING DAYS AFTER RECEIPT OF THE REPORT, A COPY OF ITS RESOLUTION TO THE APPROPRIATE SUPERVISING AND EXAMINING DEPARTMENT OF THE BSP. THE RESOLUTION SHALL SHOW THE ACTION (S) TAKEN ON THE REPORT, INCLUDING ON THE COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS AND THE NAMES OF THE DIRECTORS PRESENT AND ABSENT AMONG OTHER THINGS."

XXX

Section 2. The "**Checklist of BSP Requirements in the Submission of Financial Audit Report and Reports Required Under Section 7 of Circular No. 478**" is hereby renamed "**Checklist of BSP Requirements in the Submission of Financial Audit Report (FAR), Annual Audit Report (AAR), and Reports Required Under Section 7 of Circular No. 478**" (Appendix to Subsec. X160.1) and amended as attached.

Section 3. The foregoing amendments are hereby adopted as amendments to the U Regulations, the Regulations and Regulations of the Manual of Regulations for Non-Bank Financial Institutions (MORNBFI).

This Circular shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication either in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

For the Monetary Board

(Sgd.) AMANDO M. TETANGCO, JR.
Governor

22 December 2006

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Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino

Phone firm sings new tune to play catch-up

Nokia uses music to tap market Sony Ericsson has been capturing

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

THE QUICKEST way to the youth's fickle heart is through their ears.

This why Nokia (Philippines) Inc. put its events showcase on the road late last year to endear buyers from the 15-25 age bracket to top tier, and of course buy, one of its new phones designed specifically with music in mind.

Three phones include the Nokia 5100 Xpressmusic, a compact sliding phone that holds up to 1,500 songs, has dedicated music keys and can synchronize tunes with a personal computer; the Nokia 5320 Music Edition that comes bundled with a 512MB microSD card and the Nokia 5200 and Nokia 5250 Xpress Music with its unique "twist" design.

The top-line 5-Series also got a makeover to suit the music lovers' tastes.

The new Nokia 901 has an 8-gigabyte space that can store up to 6,000 songs and because of its top-range speakers, the music comes out with full bass and treble.

The Nokia 3071, on the other hand has 256-of memory and integrated stereo speakers while the Nokia 870 Music Edition has 1GB of memory, and also has dedicated music keys for quick access to the music library.

All these phones likewise have the requisite camera functions, MP4 camcorder and FM radio player, and yes, can call and send text messages, too.

Realizing that it is not enough to brag about the phones' features, Nokia invested in school tours and held parties all over Metro Manila to forge a closer relationship with its target market.

"For our market to grow, we must be able to bond with the youth," explains Nokia marketing manager Chaco del Rio.

Nokia is playing catch-up since one of its competitors, Sony Ericsson, was the early mover in the music category, helped along by the phone maker's association with the revered Walkman music brand of Japan's Sony Corp.

Last December 16, Nokia hosted the Sound Trip, which featured four parties in different venues in just one night, so that the lovers of one type of music—jazz, rock, hip hop or disco, can party together.

The event hosted the country's first dance party that was from 8 to 11 in the morning, in honor of the growing number of call center agents, who end their shift at around 5 in the morning.

Nokia has also tied-up with Airborne Access in a promotion wherein buyers of the Nokia music phones will get free one-hour access to over 400 hot spots all over the Philippines powered by Airborne Access.

Three programs are part of the data-side campaign of Nokia to get a sizeable share of the market looking for combination phone and music device.

In 2002, Nokia introduced Visual Radio, where listeners can get information on artists they are listening to. Some 12 operators and 20 radio stations have signed for Visual Radio.

Nokia has also tapped musicians such as Sitti Navarro to write the soundtrack to the Nokia 8800 Sirocco Edition and compose polyphonic tunes for loading on the Nokia phones.

Del Callar tells the inquirer that Nokia has to seriously look at getting the heads of the youth market because of its sheer size, especially in the Philippines where almost half of the population is below 25 years old.

She adds that while marketing campaigns before focused on the specific features of a phone—such as the camera, memory size, Bluetooth connectivity, the new ones talk about phones doing a whole range of things—like a Swiss knife.

"With so many phones out in the market, the youth is exposed to a whole range. So they want to have everything in their phone," she says.

But it is music that is on top of their list of must-haves in their phones, and Nokia does not see this trend changing anytime soon.

(T)oo much to bring about a phones' features, and needs to develop relationships with target market.

FCDU Taxation: Revisited

By Cristina R. Miranda and Jose A. Ocana
SGV & Co.

THE CREATION OF THE FOREIGN CURRENCY Deposit Unit (FCDU) is said to have benefited the country since it increased our links with foreign bankers, enabling the flow of deposit investments into the Philippines, creating employment opportunities and expertise in international finance, and contributing to the national development effort.

The FCDU is an account a bank which has been authorized by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) to operate under the expanded foreign currency deposit system. Under this system, BSP-qualified depository banks may obtain foreign currency loans from and may conduct foreign currency transactions with residents, non-residents, offshore banking units (OBUs) in the Philippines and other FCDUs.

From the time of its creation in September 1976 under Presidential Decree No. 1035, the taxation of FCDUs has evolved over the years.

Governing laws

Prior to 1998 (period covered by EO 1037, as amended) and then again, beginning May 21, 2004, when Republic Act No. 9294 became effective, income derived by FCDUs from foreign currency transactions with nonresidents, OBUs or the Philippines, local commercial banks, including branches of foreign banks that may be authorized by the BSP to transact business with FCDUs and other depository banks under the expanded foreign currency deposit system are exempt. Even all cases, except net income from such transactions as may be specified by the secretary of Finance, upon recommendation by the Monetary Board, to be subject to the regular income tax payable by banks. On the other hand, interests income from foreign currency loans granted by FCDUs to residents, other than OBUs in the Philippines or other depository banks under the expanded system are subject to a final tax at the rate of 10 percent.

From 1998 to May 20, 2004, however, the Tax Reform Act (TRA) of 1997 has subjected to a 10 percent final tax the offshore income previously exempt, currently being derived by an FCDU from foreign currency transactions with local commercial banks including branches of foreign banks that may be authorized by the BSP to transact business with FCDUs and other depository banks under the expanded foreign currency deposit system.

Tax-Files

The TRA also retained the 10 percent final tax on interest income from foreign currency loans granted by such FCDUs to residents. However, the TRA has apparently deleted or failed to reenact the treatment of income derived by the FCDUs from foreign currency transactions with non-residents of the Philippines will not be subject to income tax.

Thus, FCDUs, insofar as foreign currency transactions with OBUs, local commercial banks, including branches of foreign banks that may be authorized by the BSP to transact business with FCDUs, are exempt from the 10-percent final tax before 1998 and after May 20, 2004, but subject to the 10-percent tax from 1998 to May 20, 2004. There is no difference in the tax treatment under the foregoing laws with respect to interest income on loans earned by FCDUs from residents other than the above, or those earned from non-residents, since these are subject to 10 percent tax on sources, respectively since the time of the FCDUs' creation.

Business seminars set

LEARN THE TECHNICAL KNOWHOW ON how to make different soaps and start your own business. Or learn fresh flower arrangement in a one-day seminar.

The Golden Treasure Skills and Development Program will conduct the one-day seminar on soap making on Jan. 13, Saturday, at the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD) Magsaysay Avenue, corner Human Street, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Topics to be discussed are sourcing of materials, costing, Melt-lipstick will get in experience on how to make liquid dishwashing soap, liquid hand soap, liquid all purpose soap, bar detergent soap, herbal bath soap (papaya, kalamansi, cucumber, oatmeal etc.) powder soap, bonus courses are liquid bleach, rile and hand cleaner, fabric softener, car shampoo and how to process virgin coconut oil for soap. Participants will receive certificates of training right after the seminar. All the materials will be provided.

The flower arrangement workshop will also be on Jan. 13 at the Vermont Blooms Unlimited at 9 Aurora Blvd., Brgy. 3, Quezon City from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

To be discussed are sourcing of materials, costing etc. There will be a hands-on experience on how to make long and low arrangement.

Call 912-40-28, 436-79-26, 913-61-31 or 911-29-66.

Chatting: Some 30 children of Mayor employees were around the company's Christmas tree in December singing Christmas carols to rain donations for Typhoon "Yoyong" victims in Bicol. The activity was part of Mayor's "Kantong Gwapo" for kids, which is part of the firm's corporate social responsibility policy.

Aquarium fishes give color to villager's life

By Phelan Alexander Lobrio
Inquirer Southern Luzon

INNOVATIVE: Fish ponds of bamboo boxes lined with plastic canvas, water filter using plastic soft-drink bottles and foam, dug out holes lined with plastic canvas made by Arman Asudin and other trainees.

ALITAGTAG, BATANgas—It all began when Arman Asudin with 53 other townsfolk attended the 1st Training in Ornamental Fish Breeding and Culture sponsored by the National Fisheries and Biological Center (NFBC) of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in August 2001.

Success stories from successful ornamental aquarium fish farmers in Batangas developed during the activity inspired Asudin to venture into the aquarium fish trade.

Middleside export for aquarium fishes at that time was high at $1.8 million per ton compared to local fishes whose freight on board value reached $2,700 per metric ton, according to BFAR.

Criticisms

Starting a business, however, is a place where most people source jobs, turned out to be true for Asudin.

"When I was starting to dig holes in my backyard and lining up canvas, people were asking me whose remains I would bury in that pit. People were believed that fishes could hear and grow their young in backyard seeding," Asudin recalls.

Others joked, "Why will you raise fishes that you aren't eats anyway?"

Today, Asudin is the leading exporter of guppy fishes to Hai Industries Co. which he embarked in 2002 with P5,000 as capital.

Starting a business, however, is a place where most people source jobs, turned out to be true for Asudin.

"When I was starting to dig holes in my backyard and lining up canvas, people were asking me whose remains I would bury in that pit. People were believed that fishes could hear and grow their young in backyard seeding," Asudin recalls.

Others joked, "Why will you raise fishes that you aren't eats anyway?"

Today, Asudin is the leading exporter of guppy fishes to Hai Industries Co. which he embarked in 2002 with P5,000 as capital.

Main guppies sell for P5 a piece while females go for P2.50 a piece. Both are both sold in volumes of 100, 300 and 500 heads.

Variations

Guppies belong to the family of Poeciliidae and are among the most popular aquarium pets in the world.

They are noted for their ability to produce appearance variations ranging from color consistency and sails.

Females grow up to 4 centimeters length while males at 2½-3 cm.

Sourced from Central America and South America, these small, colorful aquarium fishes are the hearts, which immediately bore young fishes instead of hatching eggs.

Guppies can both grow in fresh water and aquarium fishes and new color varieties can be created through experimental breeding, which interests hobbyists.

Imported guppy types include red mentle guppy, blue diamond, red bloode and snakeskin guppy whose names and colors speak for their characteristics.

P100 capital

Asudin finished a vocational agriculture course at Mindanao State University in 1975.

FISHERMAN: Marketing Cooperative of Alitagtag (Fimcoa) head Arman Asudin.

Although he majored in fisheries, he ventured into upholstery for several years earning P3,000-P5,000 monthly.

After realizing the potentials of aquarium fish from NFBC's training, he started his business in August 2001.

Asudin started with only P100, several plastic bags and five guppy breeders to raise the fish in his backyard.

NFBC experts recognized that Batangas Taalan's topography was not ideal enough to grow fishes.

The village and itself share not hard water and water from the town is available only every other day.

Arman and other training participants came up with their own models and pioneering canal structures to solve such problems.

The models are inexpensive and cheap for small and start-up entrepreneurs.

For instance, Asudin dug holes in his backyard, which he lined up with canvas to hold water.

Other trainees used old soft-drink bottles, old bath tubs, bamboo frames, boxes and even abandoned piggery farms to make their own fish ponds.

The lowly plastic bottle has been recycled by several fishmen. Some filter device, commonly called bio-screen, is used for hatching artemia, live food for aquarium fishes.

Within three days, Asudin's five guppies were bearing fries.

In one month, the broodlers are transferred in four hundreds of fishes, to nursery in 3 to 4 months, ready for sale to pet shops.

"When I started to see the fishes grow, I was in overwhelmed. Every time I look at them in my aquarium, all my problems, worries and illnesses are gone," Asudin says.

His guppy business has added P8,000-P10,000 to his monthly income.

Success stories from Arman inspired other people in Alitagtag and neighboring towns to follow his footsteps and started raising aquarium fishes in their respective yards.

BUSINESS

Measure granting workers tax break pushed

Structure follows strategy

By Brenda M. Cruzicion

THE SUNDAY IS THE FIRST OF THE Three Kings. We can learn lessons in governance from a U.S. Christmas homage that, as I recall from my college days, goes something like this:

"One night, out over the stillness of an earning harvest, our seers (for whatever dollar bills of forbidden, there were a sky... a gentle sky. The earth did not hear the sky, for the earth slept. The sea did not hear the sky, for the sea was filled with its own noise. But two types of people heard the sky.

"The wise men, those who knew they do not know everything, and humble shepherds, those who knew they know nothing. And from that day to this day, only two types of people continue to hear the sky: The wise and the humble."

Strategy and structure

A key strategy for governance is ensuring transparency and participation. This ensures both—and I humbly learn from them in the government, Wisdom is necessary in choosing and building on the suggestions of private sector stakeholders, while humility is needed to adopt recommendations not originating from the government.

Quite often, people don't with what they consider as an ideal organizational structure, then they think of how to implement the strategy within this structure.

Research shows that the more effective way is "structure follows strategy." First, you decide what to do (strategy), then design the structure to implement it. What is needed is a commitment to the strategy of transparency and participation, then the political will to formulate the best structure to make it happen.

Last Dec. 20, agricultural and industrial leaders assembled for the first Task Force on Anti-Smuggling meeting with private sector participation. TFAS is chaired by Customs Commissioner Manuel Morales.

Antismuggling applications

We commend Morales and all the BOC people for the 39-percent increase in the agency's revenue collection in 2006. We also appreciate Morales' initiative in asking for private sector participation in TFAS. But the TFAS' structure, by itself, is inadequate in following the desired strategy of transparency and accountability.

COMMENTARY

In 2003, the government implemented a three-part structure that most effectively addressed this strategy. It had the National Anti-Smuggling Task Force which was almost the same as TFAS. But it also had two additional bodies that helped keep the smuggling cats of agricultural products in Metro Manila at bay. In November 2004, NATF was reinstituted, but not the Coast and Anti.

This partial solution has since failed to duplicate the antismuggling success demonstrated by the prior structure.

National Confederation of Dry Batters president Alfred Lhuillier, "We cannot rely solely on the BOC for the antismuggling effort. In the recent pork smuggling case, the goods were apprehended outside, not inside, Customs territory. Where those smuggled goods were retained inside, some of them disappeared.

"Clearly, while there are many good BOC personnel, other agencies and groups are needed for check and balance. How can the BOC effectively monitor itself? We strongly recommend the reinstitution of Coast. If you have smuggling in not stopped immediately, any of our leaders has proposed a 'pig holiday,' which means no pork deliveries to Metro Manila."

Federation of Philippine Industries president Jesus Arranz also wants Coast reinstated. Coast members were the secretaries of finance, agriculture, trade, transportation and justice. There were also participants from the private sector, with the Alyansa Agrikultura, FPI and the Pilot Trade Alliance attending the Coast bi-weekly meetings. With the initially suggested TFAS quarterly meetings deemed by the customs commissioner are appreciated, Arranz says, "That cannot be a substitute for the Coast, which, because of its very structure and past performance record, is absolutely necessary to produce results for reaching results."

Recommendation

Records show there is a difference of ₱10 billion between what the ongoing customs report to us and what the Bureau of Customs says we receive from the agency. It is reported 1/2 percent VAT and an average tariff of 5 percent, this means a potential loss of more than ₱80 billion in yearly revenue. It is hoped that our government officials are guided by the wisdom and humility G. K. Chesterton spoke about, and hear the cry for the Coast reinstated. This added resource will help follow the desired strategy of ensuring transparency and accountability to us our fight against smuggling.

(The author is Agrowatch chair and Senator Cayetano secretary for Senate Majority Programs and Projects. For inquiries, email agrowatch@hotmail.com or telefax 852-8122112)

DOF's proposed relief to cover only minimum wage earners

By Michelle V. Rarne

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE IS asking Congress to make permanent the temporary income tax relief earlier given to minimum wage earners.

The expense, granted on Jan. 1, 2006 through a revenue regulation, was good for only one year. The regulation did not provide minimum wage earners outright exemption from payment of income tax but only directed employers to suspend collection of withholding tax from them for the whole year. This was aimed at helping workers cope with the increase in the value added tax only and the adverse effects of the rising cost of fuel.

According to finance officials, Congress has to pass a pending bill that seeks to exempt permanently minimum wage earners from paying income tax. The measure, according to them, needs to be approved before April 15, the deadline for filing income tax, otherwise, minimum wage earners will have to pay their accumulated tax obligations for 2006 on or before that date.

Covered by the temporary relief are those receiving monthly income of ₱5,000 and below.

The VAT Reform law expanded the coverage of the tax to include oil and electricity and raised the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent.

A source from the department said the government would lose some ₱900 million in revenue collection a year if the income tax exemption were made permanent.

But the source said the DOF was supporting the bill, noting that the improved fiscal position of the government would allow it to grant temporary tax exemption to minimum wage earners.

The DOF was earlier asked by the Palace to study the feasibility of expanding the coverage of the tax break to include middle income individuals. Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, however, said the DOF would be supporting only the tax break for minimum wage earners for now.

"Talks on expanding the coverage of the tax break should be held only when the government has already achieved a zero budget deficit," an official said.

The DOF has set a target of wiping out the budget deficit by 2008. For 2006, the deficit was expected to reach ₱90 billion or P90 billion.

UA&P sees '07 inflation at 4.7%

GLOBAL OIL PRICES ARE EXPECTED TO FALL below $60 a barrel this year, supporting a further slowdown in the increase in the prices of goods in the domestic market.

This was the forecast made by the University of Asia & the Pacific in its press briefing yesterday.

In its projection, the average inflation rate for 2007 will settle at only 4.8 percent, consistent with the government's target.

The inflation rate stood at 4.7 percent last November, the lowest since June 2004.

The country imports at least 90 percent of its oil requirements. Domestic commodity prices are therefore highly dependent on the cost of imported oil.

A study made by UA&P economist Bernardo Villegas and presented by fellow economist Peter Lee showed that the expected decline in oil prices this year was anchored on projections that demand for oil would start to decelerate.

Dubai crude, the benchmark used in setting domestic oil prices, averaged at $61.48 a barrel in 2006, after having a record high of close to $70 a barrel last August.

Spike in oil prices was blamed on supply disruptions due to conflicts in the Middle East, a major source of oil, and moves of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) to jack up prices.

Also according to the study, the growth in the global demand for oil is seen to slow down this year amid efforts of governments to seek alternative sources of fuel. —Michelle U. Reyes

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LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Bandi Formoso

Sunday
A pretty linen dress is perfect for Sunday get-togethers with the family.

Monday
A chic blazer is all you need when climbing the corporate ladder.

Tuesday
An ultra-feminine eyelet dress is just the right getup when meeting up with the girls for lunch.

Keeping it real

MOST WOMEN WITH A keen sense of style know how to keep things simple and effortlessly chic. Being fashionable doesn't mean one has to dress outrageously in the latest trends, after all. The key: Choosing a wardrobe that's sharply edited to suit one's lifestyle and personality.

Miss Bradie understands real women's needs. So, for spring/summer 2007, the designer presented a collection of clean, sleek and relaxed pieces that can form the backbone of any woman's stylish wardrobe.

The easy-to-wear collection is mostly neutral in solid shades of chocolate brown and white dominance, with shades of signature printed ethic in pink and lime green. Meanwhile, classic black is interpreted through an assortment of far-from-boring pieces. Miss Bradie chooses to innovate through material and cut while focusing on the integrity of his construction, as seen in this season's perfectly fitted cargo pants and classic bias-cut slip dresses.

To make it easier for busy, modern women to strategically organize their wardrobes, the collections is presented through the days of the week. From silk printed slip dresses for a Saturday girls' night out, to crisp and pretty linen numbers for Sunday brunch, to soft jersey knits and suits for business Monday and so on. There are even comfy cargos and luxe sportswear for more casual days, and LBDs to entice you into your own for cocktail or date nights.

Apples Alerta-Guillermo

Wednesday
A flirty chiffon number is perfect for cocktails.

Thursday
Casual shorts are required when running errands.

Friday
A subtly sexy jersey halter dress is a date-night must-have!

Saturday
A brightly printed silk tunic worn with jeans is ideal for those girls' nights out.

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BUSINESSMAN Raoul Bautista; top designer Ben Valdes and beauty maven Arvina Rodriguez; and Rosanna Prieto

KNIT queen Lolo Tan Gan; ultra-glam Vicky Zubiri; fashionista Sigrid Djamal and renowned makeup artist Patrick Ross

BUSINESSMAN Senator Tessanie Manicad-ang social secretary Bettina Arroyo (Bautista) and socialite Maty Hechanova and Maybeth de Leon

SHOPPERS Cristeta and Denise Tantoco, Delfino Ed and Margarita Delgado, Sharon Lee, and international businessman Farrah Hirsanee

SHANGRI-LA Hotel Makati's GM, popular Greg Dagen; director Tessa Prieto-Valdes, Shang Makati's director of communications Joy Wiseman and Shang Kuala Lumpur's well-loved GM Jarlath Lynch

Joint birthday bash gathers high society and show-biz world

SUPER stylish Lolo Carpo, Deedee Tesoro and Christie's Mona Bautista

ENGAGED COUPLE Architect Anna Ty and Hong Kong Disneyite's Diana Lowenko

CEBU'S dazzling Amparito Uralde

FASHION jobs Mom Rosmin Tuviera

BENEFIT international owner and gentleman with the golden heart, Ben Chan, and popular architect Miguel Pastor

POPULAR business man Fred Uytengsu

EYE-CATCHING stylish Cohen Amorsolo and ultra-glamorous Cheng Choi

FABULOUS Lissa top woman Doris Magsaysay Ho

BANTAY Bata's Gina Lopez

SUPER BUSY PAGE, GORGEOUS CONtact queen Pops Fernandez and Philippine Tatler sendsational gorgeous editor Anton San Diego, celebrated their 40th birthday together with a fabulous bash.

Pops and Anton had been classmates since the grade at the International School, and have been bosom friends all these years. To mark a milestone in their life, they decided to hold a joint celebration that was, believe me, definitely one of the most fun events of this year!

The happening took place at Makati Shangri-La's famous Century Ballroom, which was chosen for the two private party and was transformed into the most chic, super high-end bar ever seen in town, pulangeles.

Playing the unpolished emcee was none other than the Cadillac-slapper herself, Tessa Prieto-Valdes, who was looking as fashionably slim.

The program started with guest singing by top soprano Karla Gutierrez. She was followed by one of my favorite singers, Rhap Salazar, whose singing can lift you off your seat and make you scream for "more! more! more!" She was followed by the pint-size voice of the adorable Cris Villonco.

The talented Pops danced did a fantastic medley from "Saturday Night Fever." This was a special present by none other than Stella Arnaiz Hizalde, April 20, out of nowhere, as his mark. Some impressions appeared, followed by a Chet Impersonator; they rocked the stage with the hit-hits of the two divas. They also danced with the familiar guests such as Bubbles Gen Jay Zabat, Gribaldi's Steve Lawrence Rosa Pe, Cookielette Tantoco and Rhapsody Cannon Tinio.

The dancing made the crowd even more ecstatic. Not to mention there was overflowing bubbly champagne, thanks to Olga Anatovic of Moet-Hennessy.

Announcement, celebrant Pops also obliged with a song. She was joined later by her sister, the beautiful Helen Gamboa Stella. The birthday boy who, from its song, obliged the crowd that had serenaded for him to sing.

By 10 p.m., most guests had arrived, such as business businessman and socialites Raul Quiaoit and gorgeous Helen Gamboa, mother of Pops' lily Veronica Del Rosario Ona Prieto; Shangri-La's super mom Anabelle Lynch, who had joined in from Kuala Lumpur; and Hong Kong society's virginia woman of substance, Bonnie Cohen.

Others joined her close pals shopping buddies Cristeta Rhapsody Hechanova and Cookie Lopez of ABS-CBN Foundation.

Also there were beautiful couple Sandra and Mona Tantoco, glamorous gals Vicky Zubiri, Ching Cruz, Beverly Tuason, Amparito Uralde, Sigrid Djamal, Cecille Lucero, Cristeta Tantoco and Anna Ugarte.

GORGEOUS concert queen Pops Fernandez and Philippine Tatler's mega editor-in-chief Anton San Diego

Ben Valdes, Lolo Tan Gan were among the sea of beautiful people who rocked the dance floor as the fantastic band Absent Eve played 70s and 80s songs. Superb DJ Rickey Pujalte also followed, playing swell music.

What was so fantastic about the party was that major show-biz personalities, politicians and high society hobnobbed mingled. There she was, the four of hours, adorable, eye-catching Mayor Vilma Santos-Recto!

Also there were Gina de Venecia, Shangri-La's well-loved GM Greg Dagen and the band's top stars, cyber-singer Jay Wiseman; Sec. Jeggie Ejercito Estrada; business magnate Ed Belgado and Margarita Belgado; Shopaholics Delgado; Shopaholics Delgado; Shopaholics Del

MILO Medical Group managing physician Christina Lindog

ONE of Belo's popular products, Ohagi Skin Health Restoration System

LOTUS Hand and Foot Spa owner Leah Magallanes

THE SPA marketing manager Aimee Aquino

New Year pampering at the mall

STRAIGHT! volume hair extension by Hairdraft

THE POSH, THE UPSCALE MALL IN Ortigas Center suggests six new ways of not only looking good, but also feeling healthier and more confident in 2007.

1. Get a big haircut and color from one of the Top Hairdraft Salons at the mall's fifth level. This contemporary salon, part of the high-end ECRU chain of salons, is known for its hip haircuts and treatments like coloring, rebonding and digital perming.

2. Welcome wellness. Take a peaceful, tranquil break at The Spa, also located at the fifth level of The Podium. It offers different massage therapies like the Swedish Massage, Japanese-style Shiatsu Massage, Deep Tissue Massage, and Aromatherapy Massage.

3. Get a basic manicure/facial? The New Year is also a good time to focus on skincare, and you can do so in style at Starphire at The Podium's lower ground level. It offers painless facial treatments resulting in brighter, smoother and more relaxed skin.

4. Try a seamless manicure and 14-hour treatment! Give your hands and feet a treat at the Lotus Hand and Foot Spa at The Podium's lower ground floor. The 14-hour signature manicure treatment is a mixture of warm lotions and moisturizers that are smoothened through the cuticles, hands and even arms.

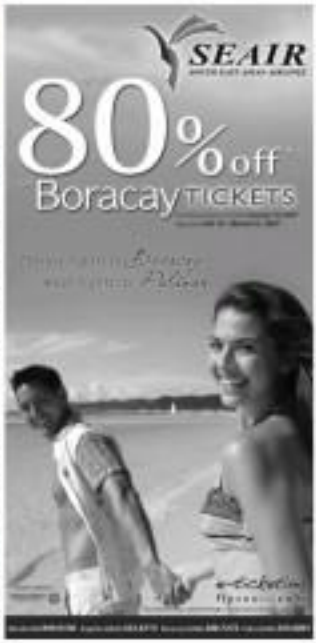
5. Try beauty the Belo way. The Belo Medical Group is at the forefront of an industry serving the highly specialized market of comprehensive beauty enhancement with the use of ultra-modern methodology.

Located at the lower ground level of The Podium, the outlet offers facials, peels, lifts, augmentation, and other cutting-edge treatments.

6. Make grooming fun for kids. The new Kids Hairsalon at The Podium's lower ground level makes looking good fun for kids. Some of the seats are made of fantastic toy cars. Kids can also watch their favorite movies while getting a haircut.

The salon, which caters to kids 3 months-13 years old, offers a free haircut and toys to kids after their 12th haircut. It also offers free haircut certificates for babies.

KIDS Hair salon at the lower ground floor of The Podium



Cost-cutting beauty maintenance plan

MAKEOVER 911

Kinny Salut

FOR THE ENTIRE MONTH OF JANUARY, I am cutting weight loss and cost-cutting. There are always my concerns after the holiday excess. Everyone will be clearing our credit card debts and earning back the lost cash from the incurred expenses.

One area I have neglected is my hair. Despite constant reminder from my stylist, I literally had no time to block out a good five hours that cover the back and forth trip to the salon, highlight and color treatments, a cut and style. The moment November hit, it was all a blur of activities, preparation and meeting deadlines at work.

While getting ready for Christmas, I noticed my roots were visible by almost two inches. But my hairstylist had looked great, thanks to Hairdraft Spiritup's (of Hairstyle Salon) feebreifly mysterious styling last October so that was nothing to worry about.

I rummaged through my Christmas loot from Rimel and found the three Twin Flash Browns hair colors in P795 each. Choose from Cool Chestnut Brown (mostly neutral with hints of red and gold tones), P795 Ivory Gold Brown (mostly gold tones) and P795 Milky Cocoa Brown (stronger reddish tones).

L'ORÉAL Paris Flash Browns

What makes the different from most DIY permanent hair color is that it is designed to show up on naturally dark brown hair.

Other brands are made for Caucasian hair and oftentimes their model on the box is actually a blond who has light hair, that's why it registers on the box is particular color. Once I, with my dark brown hair, apply the other brands, they barely register on my hair if at all. Ironically, I would just buy a shade that is a lot lighter like honey blonde to get the perfect shade of brown I wanted.

This was very risky though because you cannot predict the outcome and a lot of times I ended up with hair that was too brown and/or deep looking.

Twin Flash Browns include a brown color bonanza in the mix so one would not need to bleach the hair beforehand to get the color on the model.

Note that everyone's hair is different so results may be lighter or darker than what you see on the model or your friend. Re-matching my previous color with my roots, it was a toss-up between P795 Cool Chestnut Brown and P795 Ivory Gold Brown, based on the color swatch on the side of the box. I decided to go for the slightly darker P795 to play it safe as too light a tone may resemble white hair.

Upon writing this article my hair was dried and dried. Since the rest of my hair was already previously colored, I concentrated application on my darker roots and left it on for 20 minutes, then applied left-over color to the rest of my hair and left it for another 10 minutes before rinsing. The result was darker than the model on the box, but there was a definite color change which was obviously lighter than my roots.

Based on my experience, color continues to lighten up to two weeks after application and there really is a good possibility it will match the color on the model. For now, it is about two shades deeper.

Important: Perform a 48-hour skin test as instructed in the enclosed manual to make sure you will have an allergic reaction. Even if you tested negative to previous hair coloring kits, some people who have hereto had immune systems may suddenly develop them. Please read instructions thoroughly.

The Twin Flash Browns are available this month at leading department, grocery and drug stores and costs P525. That's so much cheaper than a professional salon job. It may not yield results as impressive as a salon's, but it will tide you over till you have cleared debts and raised money for your next professional color job around two months from now.

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JESSICA Hagedorn, author

RAMON de Ocampo, cast member

Acclaimed 'Dogeaters' to be restaged in LA

... plus, kidding around with George Clooney

LOS ANGELES—JESSICA HAGEDORN's "Dogeaters," a hardsearing, sprawling portrait of the Philippines in the 1960s, gets a revamping in LA with previews beginning Jan. 14.

Based on Jessica's best-selling novel of the same name, which was nominated for the prestigious National Book Award in 1990, the play will run from Jan. 25 to Feb. 11 at the Center Theater Group/ETC@Walt Disney Concert Hall complex. CTG, one of America's top theater companies that also produces award-winning productions at the Ahmanson Theater and Mark Taper Forum, mounted the "Women Brave Song" revival which starred Lea Salonga.

For untold this production first presented by UP's Dulaang Sandugo Filipino-American and TOKE Productions, Inc. in 2004 and highly recommended it. Ann Lawrence Alvarez, the first Filipino to direct the play, returned as Creative Award nominee for that 2004 production, directs again.

Short rehearsal period

Reprising their characters in Jessica's simultaneously entertaining and thought-provoking commentary about contemporary Philippines are Gino Aquino, Esperanza Catalig, Pom de Leon, Lisa Del Mundo, Sean Haggerill, Ed Rimando, Nick Salamanca, Robert Almodovar, Charlotte Ayala, Antoine Reynaldo Diel, Cedric Ingalos, Kennedy Kabasares, Ivan Davila, Natividad Obania, Giovanni Ortega, Elizabeth Paz and Marcus Paz. Also in the cast but not in the 2004 production are Ramon de Ocampo, Alberto Isaac and Orlando Pahinang.

We asked Ramon, whom we profiled in 2003 when he appeared with Samuel Jackson, Ice Cube, Willem Dafoe and Scott Speedman in "Alpha Dog of the Union," how rehearsals are going. Mr. interviewed the Georgia Mellon School of Drama graduate via e-mail (his time zone) he was in the think of rehearsals, with the cast spending the holidays rehearsing for the first preview night just a week away.

"Every show is different and I'm fascinated with how this one is shaping up," Ramon wrote. "For one, we have a very short rehearsal (about two weeks before previews), which only adds to the energy. It's the first Filipino director of 'Dogeaters' as well, and that's something to be excited about."

It turned out that this actor, who once appeared in an all-male Filipino Repertory Theater version of "The Taming of the Shrew," was not new to "Dogeaters." "Interestingly enough, I've been involved with 'Dogeaters' for a long time," he shared. "Besides having the novel, I was in the New York Public Theater Workshop of the show as well as the actual production at the Public Theater in New York."

ACCLAIMED ED

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD

Rahen T. Seyades

FOUR of 14 survivors: Dea Quinsaat, Riel Asuncion, Paula Bonifacio and Bonni Lacuata

Kiko, Jean, Chariz & Lui booted out of 'Starstruck'

By Nini Valera

MULTIMEDIA DIRECTOR AND "Starstruck" mentor Lenny Ignacio gave Jewel Mische, Jeni Giovanna and Dave Valentino a rare for "bad behavior" the past week.

But this did not affect the standing of the three talent search hopefuls during the elimination round last Sunday at Bonifacio Park in Manila.

The three were among the 36 who qualified for the week's challenges.

Fifty percent of the survivors' scores were based on the tally of the council, which also includes actress Lorna Tolentino and talent manager Douglas Quijano. The other 50 percent was from the viewers' text votes (cut-off was midnight of Dec. 30).

"I gave Jewel a score for being late, and for refusing to wear the clothes chosen for her, and Dave for using his cell phone during workshops," Ignacio told Inquirer.ph Entertainment after Sunday's show.

"Dyel, I didn't expect Kiko Chiuk of Pangasinan to be voted off," Ignacio said. "He had a perfect score in all areas. Unfortunately, he had the lowest number of text votes."

NINI V.

DID YOU KNOW...

LOS ANGELES—Oscar-winning actress Julia Roberts is expecting her third child with husband Danny Moder, People magazine reported Friday. Roberts, 39, the star of "Pretty Woman" and "Erin Brockovich," is due to give birth next summer, her spokeswoman Nancy Ingebritsen told People magazine. Roberts and Moder have two year-old twins, Hazel and Finn. AFP

Opposites attract–then detract, and almost self-destruct

OPPOSITES ATTRACT BUT ALSO detract, and almost self-destruct in the frisky young-marrieds romp, "Kasal, Kanin, Kondo." The human clash atop busy balls for feisty gal with *problemang pamasa* is so old in the movie folks, but writer-director Jerry Reyes

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

suffocate it with peppy touches—not to mention.

Judy Ann Santos plays the hard-working girl and soul and Iwan Ryan Agoncillo is her wealthy beloved. Despite some obvious and not-so-glaring differences, they get along pretty well, but their respective sets of parents (Gina Pareño, Subas Herrero, Gina Alajar, Gloria Diaz, Ariel Ureta) create all sorts of problems that almost cause the breakup of the young marriage, even before baby arrives.

The film's first half is rollicking, as the developing story establishes its two personalities. After a while, however, one senses that the performances are generally too loud, unsteady level, and non-the-top.

Somebody should remind the cast members that they're acting for film not a stage comedy or a shrill TV sitcom.

Comedic outburst

For instance: Gina Pareño is often loads of exuberant fun, but here she's too broadly madcap by half pilling one comedic outburst on top of another in overdrawn melodrama.

For her part, Gloria Diaz plays it cooler, thank goodness, but few acting beats and comedic shifts are too measured and planned to be really televisual.

As for their spouses, Urela gets given much opportunity to strut his stuff, while Alajar is a welcome relief from the ladies' wardrobe on daughter because he plays it natural and focuses on detail and nuance, rather than on a sledgehammer approach.

The movie remains rollicking enough, but another problem nags persons itself. Quite a number of the laughers in the unfolding jokes aren't really related to each other, or to an overarching comic theme, but are put in for the moment's humorous twitch, gag or punch line.

After a while, this watercolor approach fazes up the movie's focus, and the characters' interactions ships sometimes get screwed up.

Gutsy performance

Happily, Judy Ann survives this episodic approach, by virtue of her gutsy and fun performance, even if the occasionally woman actress in Manford freakouts are not acceptable.

But the most eye flyers eventually suffers from the movie's eclectic approach. His character doesn't graduate from its sit-boy, "confused" stereotype to a fully realized person, and his performance is cheap rather than sweet.

It must be said, however, that the lead couple's "real" relationship is faint thick "real" one with a welcome sense of familiarity.

It really helps when on-screen lovers are genuinely comfortable with each kind of each other.

The "kasal" aspect of the movie's title is represented by Juliana Palermo as Gina's "fling" (while he still is pregnant and unable to accommodate her physical "vigilar").

In the hands of a sexy and imaginative actress, this role could have been a stage winner, but Palermo's heavy and even sullen handling undoubtedly rather than captivate.

There and other few moments awaken the film's aspect to viewers, but it remains a should see Metro film in entirety, due to its occasionally sloppy seams and ill-fitting scenes.

Perhaps, if everybody moved in such a rush and in over-the-top in more and someone, we would have enjoyed more of those winsome and winning moments.

Acclaimed 'Dogeaters' to be restaged in LA

From page D1

(many years ago). I've done a number of staged readings of the show. I feel like the character of Joey Sands (the young, street-wise hustler and dealer from Smoke, Manila) has been a part of me (insofar as acting is concerned!) for years. When that production came up, I was, quite simply, asked to do the role. Luckily for me, I'm closing was right."

An eye-opener

Hilary Ramos and his family moved to the US in 1977, I asked him how much of an eye-opener was the Philippine society is "Dogeaters" to him. "I spent a lot of summers in the Philippines after we moved to the States so I'm not as all a stranger to airport chaos, diarrea, coup attempts, curfews, protests, roadblocks, guards and gunshots," he replied. "I was even there during the final days of the insurgency that led to the Marcos ouster. So, in a strong sense, at the time, I was present on the streets, in the thick, and so the Joaquin Coffee shop in the musings. My father's (Roberto de Ocampo) work in the negotiations to consolidate (chair of the Development Bank of the Philippines) as well as for the Ramos administration (Minister of Finance) kept me in a position to witness the politicized and sacred college of the Philippines."

He added, "So I can't say that the play itself was an eye-opener for me (as far as the political and social climate of the Philippines goes), but I think it is an eye-opener to many of those who watch the play. This play is incredibly close to my heart...it's a window to the world and the soul of the Philippines and its children. It's always an honor to be part of the play."

Mural (the play's genius creator, Rumor said) "I consider Jessica both a friend and family. She's a consummate professional, an artist of passion, skill and amazing balance. She is open enough to change things on the fly, even after her plays have been published. In fact, there are quite a few new additions in the book of the play during this restaging. We've been lucky enough to have her around. Her process is organic, and because of that, she always allows her play to grow. Jessica's poetry is amazing, and I always feel lucky to know her and get to speak her words."

"Since '60s," I've done some good post (for representation," Ramos began when I asked him for an update on his career. "I won a Garland award as part of the ensemble of 'Pera Paka,' a play about Indios presented at the Boston Court with The Asian Americ Company. I had two recurring roles on TV, I spent the better part of the year shuttling back and forth from Canada where I played Darry Dke on a US (and non-international!) crime show, 'Killer Instinct' for Sea, for 'CSI' producer Jodi Bernard. At the same time, I was on the final seasons of 'The West Wing' (season 7 was recently released on DVD) as the President's body speech-writer. Currently, I have a recurring role as Aaron on the NBC show, 'Medium.'"

The personable young man who grew up in Northern Virginia continued, "Next on my list is New York to possibly re-mount 'The Romance of Magno Rubio' off-Broadway with the Ma'Yi theater company in May. I'd be part of that cast again in a heartbeat. I met many people on a personal level."

Ramos won an OBIE (Off-Broadway Theater Awards) citation for his performance in the 2002 staging of 'Magno Rubio' in New York.

Tickets to "Dogeaters" are available at (213) 628-2772, online at centerthatrepertory.org, in person at the Ahmanson Theatre in downtown LA or at the play's venue itself, the Kirk Douglas Theatre (9436 Washington Blvd., Culver City) two hours prior to each performance.

Quick with a quip

George Clooney almost always answers questions with a quip or a joke.

The same director-writer said that in high school, he was the "kid that made the jokes and it went with me. I enjoyed it that way." The man does not like to use through an interview but he has a serious side—he is a political animal who is passionate about serious issues. Like the genocide going in Darfur, Sudan, which he has worked—over 200,000 have been killed and an estimated 2.5 million refugees displaced by the war here, in his words, "almost no aid, no protection, no hope."

When our press con with him, he was with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The 45-year-old bantled Annan about the trips he made to China and Egypt to help find solutions to the Darfur conflict. "All of us can repair that the situation is at best grave and about to get much worse," the famous Democrat was quoted by AP as saying. "They (refugees) are all alone, and nowhere are leaving, are being killed on on a massive scale, leaving these people their last great task—merely trying their families die one by one."

The socially-committed person is always there, bubbling underneath the wisecracks. He spoke calmly when he was asked some room about further during the interview. But in this column, we frame more on the light side of George.

While some of his famous friends are getting married and having babies, George has stayed single. Many (media) that he will be changing bachelor for the rest of his life, claiming that he is content to remain playful. Many don't know, though, that he did get married once, in 1989—to Talia Balsam, daughter of actor Martin Balsam. The marriage ended in a divorce in 1993.

George met with Cate Blanchett and Sidney Maguire in "The Good Germans," a period drama set in the ruins of post-World War II Berlin. The Oscar and Golden Globe-winning actress portrays a US army nurse correspondent who becomes embroiled with a former lover (Clooney) who is trying to escape his past. It was shot by director Steven Soderbergh in black and white, using the conventions of filmmaking circa 1940s, complete with an airport scene that's a homage to "Casablanca."

George and Steven seem to gently in the news after they announced that they will shut down their film company, Section 8, which produced such acclaimed films as "Good Night, and Good Luck" and "Syriana." Of course, George made a joke about it in the press one.

Wearing a navy suit with a white dress shirt, his hair slickly combed, George looked like a fashion idol than Hollywood's golden men. This nephew of the late singer, Rosemary Clooney, never fails to win strangers. We've written about the premiere parts of "Syriana" last year at the New York Public Library. While his fellow actor scrubbed those silver spoons, he was down there with the rest of the guests on the main floor, managing to meet and chat whatever came up to him. As parties, he'll make you feel like he's really connecting with you.

In "Syriana," you got beaten up. In this movie, you also get beaten up. Any explanation?

Well, it's the way I look (he said). I got beaten up in "O Brother, Where Are Thou?" You guys gave me a broken finger. I got beaten up in "Syriana." I got another broken finger. I just keep getting broken fingers. I'm like Jungle Jim. I like characters who go in looking with their chin and then realize that they're in over their head. Those are always the characters to do.

So, romantic lead roles coming up?

I'll be doing one soon. "Leatherheads" is a romantic comedy (he one that I've been writing and working on and I'm going to direct). We are starting Clint Eastwood in the first of the year with Renee Zellweger.

Can you talk some more about Renee?

I just love her. She's a dear friend. I sent her the script the day I finished it and I said, 'Are you interested?' She sent it back, saying, 'Where do we start?' That's a nice place to be when you can have an actor of that caliber ready to go to work. I'm really excited about that.

Have you emotionally involved with Renee at all?

We lived together for nine years (laughter). A lot of people didn't know that. We have several children. We adopted (laughter). If you can address the notion of romantic hits versus real love....

You know, I am the expert on romantic and realities (laughter) and probably the truest person to come to for this question. I'm glad you asked (laughter).

You mean remembering the idea of love as opposed to the reality?

I think everybody in the world has a very grand idea of what it should be like and then there's the reality of waking up with someone with bad breath. There's a difference but I am certainly not the expert on love although Steven (Soderbergh) and I have been dating for quite some time now (laughter). Did you think that Section 8 broke up because there was a fight between Steven and me?

Yes.

Really? (Laughter). Well, you're right. I don't like him. We were telling the truth.

(More on Sunday)

E-mail the columnist at rsmpales_5566@yahoo.com

GEORGE Clooney in "The Good German"

FOUR hosts combine (from top): Staff Precort, Prince Stefan, Jamil Mische and Mari Banatao

Kiko, Jean, Chariz ...

Next week two more will be eliminated

From page D1

Also disqualified were Lei Perez, Diane Solomon and Jessie Guerra.

Antonio and Dr. Carlos broke down inside the production room's door. Jamie and Jessy took to their cell phones.

The two boys have hugged and patted each other on the back. "That's how it is," Antonio said. Jamie.

Jamie said he would go back to his home province, and to school. He was in fourth year high when he dropped out after qualifying for "Starstruck."

Solomon refused to say anything. Dr. Carlos cried uncontrollably on the Duterte's shoulders.

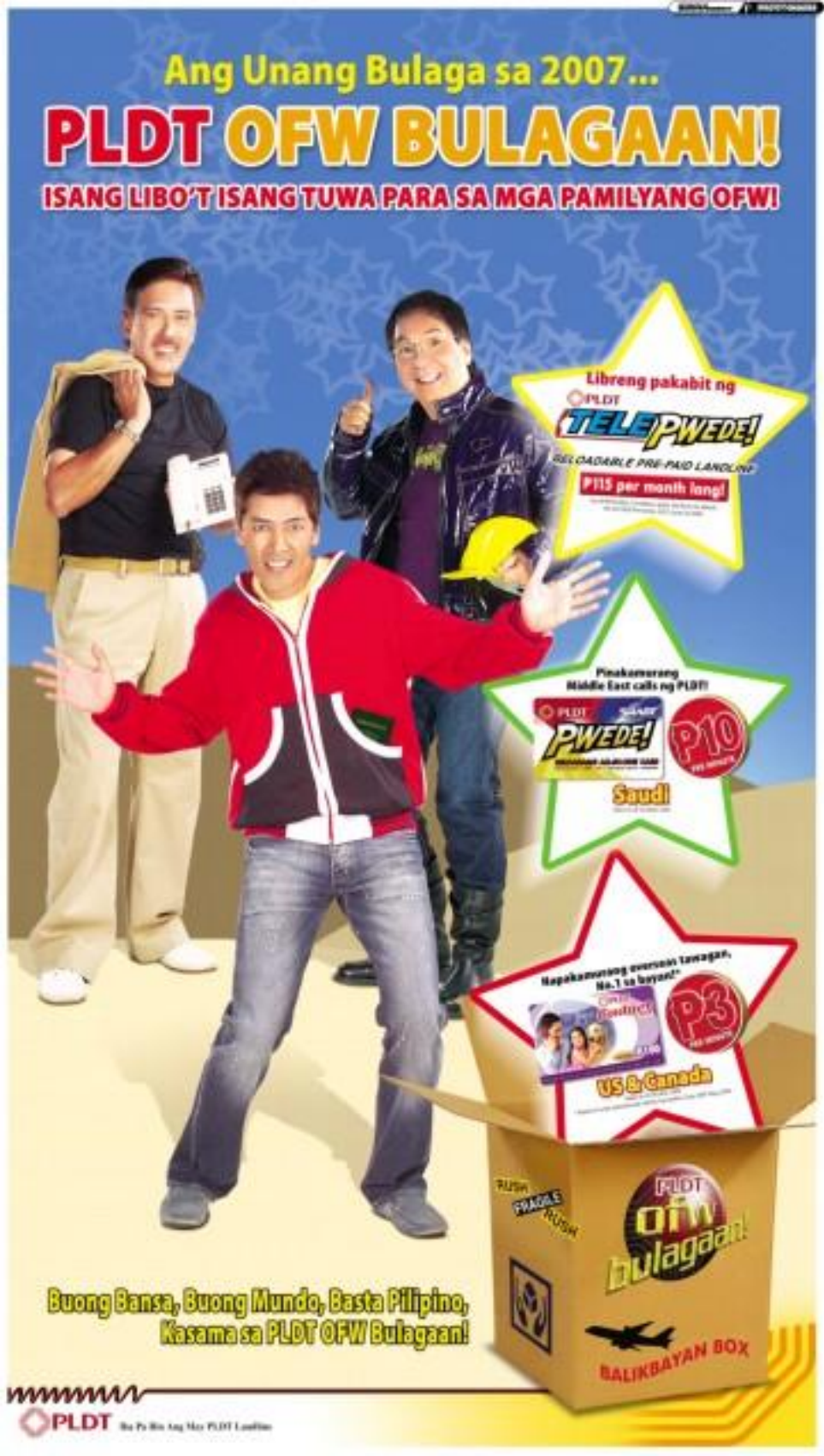
Jessie Guerra, Mercado, "Starstruck" first eliminator became emotional and her tears were for the lack of hospitals to cover their needs. "They should take it seriously if they want young in the business," she said.

"I heard there were plenty of passing final boards," commented Mercado. Mark Herras, first ultimate male survivor. "They should drop this attitude."

Among those identified as "journey" were Cheesers, a self-confessed lesbian, who has refused to wear skirts and gowns. She says she only female costumes in gown last Sunday.

The next eliminations will be held on Sunday, and then the top 11 survivors will be competing for 10 more weeks.

"Starstruck II" is in search of "The ultimate" four years. Each winner will receive P1 million and a P3 million management contract with GMA 7.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LIVING STARS

Celso Ayroso G. Velarde

Casa de Amalia

The movie queen says of her home: 'It's relaxed and eclectic ... very me'

HOME BODY

THE "HARIRA CLARA" portrait, above left, is by Rafael del Casal; at right, Amalia in the TV room, where she spends lazy afternoons.

HER FAVORITE photograph (left) from the late 1970s is prominently displayed in the living room. "Tessy Serrano did my makeup for that shoot," she recalls.

By Gilbert Sison Diega Jr.

Photos by Edwin Bacasmas

THERE A "LIVEL lil" bed to her home, Sampaguita movie queen Amalia Fuentes notes.

Perhaps it's because she has been living in the neighborhood since 1958, and in the house since 1969.

It could also be because that was precisely her reservation in architect Filipe Ramirez.

"Eclectic," she describes her personal design philosophy. "I didn't want to be tied down to one style. Filipe, better known as a furniture designer, suggested an elegant French look. Hey Versailles. I didn't want anything that tall and formal."

Quite naturally, La Amalia prevailed. "I didn't want a showroom. I wanted a home, where my kids [brothers, guests] and I can be at ease. This house is very me ... no pretensions, no fuss-ups."

Amalia and Filipe sourced Belgium, France and the Netherlands for the décor.

From stowaway she brought home a trip tych that depicted the Annunciation. From somewhere else got a Stanley painting "done by a student of Jim Brandt's in the 17th century."

She has an extensive collection of wooden jewelry boxes and other antique pieces from all over the world.

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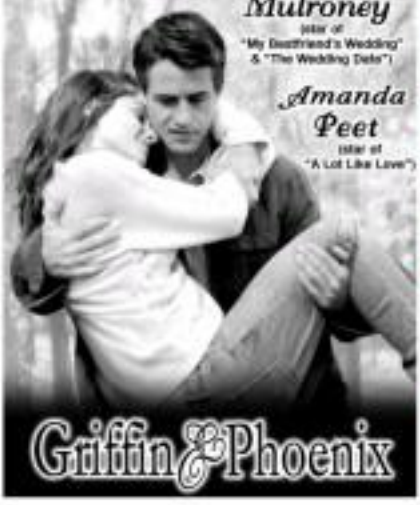

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Amanda Peet
(star of "A Lot Like Love")

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TULOON — By Paulyang Tatum Hilamburg

BEN — By Daniel Shelton

DAILY CROSSWORD

HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

7	4			1				
5	6							
			8	7		3		
		9	1					
1		4				8		3
					8	6		
		1		4	7			
							2	7
				5			9	8

Difficulty Level ★★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

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Answer to previous puzzle

3	3	2	6	1	4	7	5	8
6	7	8	3	5	9	1	4	2
4	1	5	7	2	8	9	6	3
7	8	1	9	6	5	2	3	4
2	9	6	4	8	3	5	1	7
5	4	3	1	7	2	6	8	9
8	6	9	2	4	1	3	7	5
1	2	4	5	3	7	8	9	6
9	5	7	8	9	6	4	2	1

WITH good friend Deborah Sun, near the kitchen and informal dining area. "I also have a formal dining room," Amalia says, "but this is where I take my meals every day."

SHE FOUND the Hutnik painting in Amsterdam, "done by a student of Rembrandt's in the 17th century."

Casa de Amalia

Front page B1

During her many recent trip to Turkey, Greece and Italy with husband Joey Stevens and daughter Liesl Sundberg, she again bought lots of "interesting pieces," including exotic chandeliers.

"That's what I love about my home, it can look Western, Eastern, Moroccan...truly international!"

Next stop is South America.

Needless to say, Amalia is again gearing up for a decorating majorkilman, especially since her home is currently being renovated.

She points out: "I am building cabañas by the swimming pool. I'm also planning to put up little pavilion in the garden."

Shar explains her fascination for Latin music is of later days.

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1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3 • THE
2 KABAL, KABALI, KABALO
3 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 MANO PO 5
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
7 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
8 SUPER NOYPI
9 TATLONG BARAHA
10 LIGALIG

ERMITA
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 LIGALIG
3 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
4 MANO PO 5
5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
6 KABAL, KABALI, KABALO
7 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 9

METRO EAST
1 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 KABAL, KABALI, KABALO
4 SUPER NOYPI
5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
6 MANO PO 5
7 LIGALIG
8 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 9

NOVALICHES
1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 9
2 SUPER NOYPI
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
5 MANO PO 5
6 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
7 LIGALIG
8 KABAL, KABALI, KABALO

CITISQUARE MALABON
1 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER
1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 9
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
4 KABAL, KABALI, KABALO

PARTY! PARTY!

LILY MONTEVIRGE and Hanson Medved bounced by last boyfriend Chito Puj, were seen at Valente Fs debut, a concert featuring world-renowned Filipino tenor Donald Grancio, soprano Rachelle Arevalino and the country's other top musical singers, at the Intercontinental Manila Ballroom at Dusit Thani Manila.

LILY MONTEVIRGE

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2 MANO PO 5
3 SUPER NOYPI
4 KABAL, KABALI, KABALO
5 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 9

LIPA
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 9
3 LIGALIG
4 KABAL, KABALI, KABALO
5 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA

DASMARIÑAS
1 SUPER NOYPI
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 KABAL, KABALI, KABALO
5 MANO PO 5

ANGELES
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 MANO PO 5
3 KABAL, KABALI, KABALO
4 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 9

IMUS
1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 9
2 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
3 MANO PO 5
4 SUPER NOYPI
5 LIGALIG
6 KABAL, KABALI, KABALO

STARMILLS
1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 9
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 SUPER NOYPI
4 MANO PO 5
5 LIGALIG
6 KABAL, KABALI, KABALO

BACOLOD
1 MANO PO 5
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 9
3 KABAL, KABALI, KABALO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
5 LIGALIG
6 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH

ILOILO
1 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
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'Kubrador' goes to Dubai

THE "KUBRADOR" Ivy Acuarian, producer (singer, composer) Joji Alonzo and actress of filmmaker Jet- Gina Pareño, had a blast

GINA Pareño relaxes at the Madinat Jumeirah complex

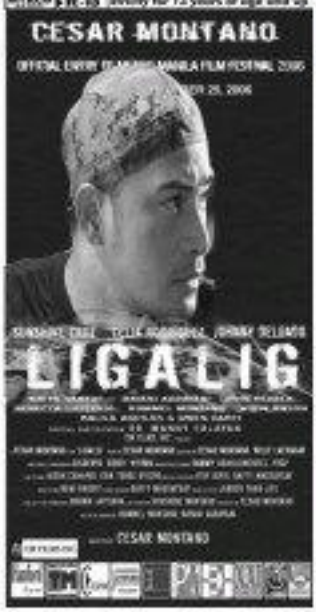
ABOUT to take a boat ride around the man-made river

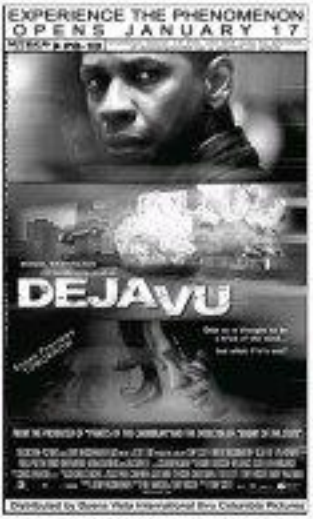
WAITING to be served in an Japanese restaurant

THE GMA Production Executive at the entrance of Al Qasr hotel, where the BF group was billeted.

GINA and "Kubrador" director Jeffrey Jeturian enjoy the sights and sounds together

Rated "A" by Cinema Evaluation Board





as the third Dubai International Film Festival, held in the United Arab Emirates from Dec. 10 to 17.

In between the acclaimed film's three screenings, the Pinoy contingent toured the Madinat Jumeirah complex—which has five-star hotels, posh malls, first-rate theaters, and a man-made river around which boats ferry visitors, as if they were in Venice.

Reynold Ken Brigo Jr.

AT THE CINEMAS

G1	1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	2 [illegible]	3 MANO PO 5	4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	
G4	1 MATAKOT SA KARMA	2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	3 [illegible]	KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	
	4 ZSA ZSA ZAPUNAAN	5 SUPER NOVA	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	7 MANO PO 5	
GB1	1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO		2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2		
GB3	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2		2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO		
	3 ZSA ZSA ZAPUNAAN	4 MATAKOT SA KARMA	5 MANO PO 5		
ATC	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2		2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO		
	3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	4 MATAKOT SA KARMA	5 MANO PO 5		
ACC	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	3 MANO PO 5	4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	
M2	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2		2 ZSA ZSA ZAPUNAAN		
	3 MANO PO 5	4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9		

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